

SELECT POEMS

1898

EDITED BY

W. J. ALEXANDER

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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TORONTO

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SELECT POEMS.

SELECT POEMS

BEING THE

LITERATURE PRESCRIBED FOR THE JUNIOR MATRICULATION AND JUNIOR LEAVING EXAMINATIONS,

1898.

EDITED WITH

INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND APPENDIX.

BY

W. J. ALEXANDER, PH.D.,

Professor of English in University College, Toronto.

TORONTO :

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INTRODUCTION.

THE STUDY OF LITERATURE.

I.

Peculiarities of the Study of Literature.

Literature in its Widest Sense.—Literature in its widest sense is thought recorded in language. It includes, therefore, all written thought,—not only poems, essays, novels, but also scientific treatises, letters, inscriptions. Euclid's *Elements*, Mill's *Logic*, Cowper's correspondence with his friends (whose publication the writer never contemplated), fall within the province of literature as well as Shakespeare's dramas and Tennyson's poems. Literature also includes thought which is not written down but registered in some fixed form of words upon the memories of men: such was the case originally with ballads and popular songs—with the poems ascribed to Homer, for example—which were registered not in written characters but in the tablets of the brain, and were transmitted by word of mouth.

The Goal of Literary Study.—The immense mass of material included under the definition just given, is the material for literary study, and the aim of the study is simply to understand this record. Setting out from the basis of the language employed, it is the work of the student of literature to attain to the state of mind which the writer intended to embody. The writer had certain thoughts, feelings, definite or vague sensations, to which he desired to give utterance; he sought for the proper vocabulary, sentence forms, imagery, etc., to afford adequate expression to these mental conditions, and having found them recorded them by writing or by other means. The

literary student reverses the process ; he takes the recorded language, and by the use of reason, imagination and so forth, interprets this record and sets up within himself, as nearly as may be, the original state of mind of the author.

Difference between the Study of Literature, and the Study of Books for other than Literary Purposes.—If literature includes all sorts of books, as our definition indicates,—even such books as Euclid's *Elements* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*—it may be asked, in what respect, when these books are our material, does the study of literature differ from the study of mathematics, or of history. It differs by its aim or point of view, and by its range. The whole aim of the student of literature is to understand with the utmost completeness what the author is expressing by his language ; on the other hand, for the student of the special department to which the book under consideration belongs, such understanding is only preliminary to a further end, viz., the determination of what are the *facts*, and to what conclusions they lead. It would not be of much moment to the student of history that he should misinterpret, or inadequately interpret, Gibbon's meaning, provided he arrived at the truth in regard to the decline of Rome ; whereas to the student of literature, Gibbon's ideas, feelings, etc., are the main objects, and the Roman Empire is not at all an immediate matter of concern. A second point of difference is, that students in other departments continually go outside of books—the recorded thoughts of men—and study facts existing in material objects and natural phenomena. This is particularly the case in science, where the student continually comes face to face with facts without the intervention of another mind ; but the student of literature never investigates, as his subject, anything which has not first passed through the mind of another, and taken form and shape there. The facts with regard to the way in which bodies fall to the earth will never come before him or concern him, as a student of literature, until some other mind has noted and recorded them ; and, even then, he does not enquire what is the truth with regard to falling bodies, but what a particular writer has said about them.

“Colour” in Literature.—Facts are sometimes much modified and *coloured* (as one may say) in this passage through another mind which invariably takes place before they come to be considered by the literary student. The axioms of Euclid represent the bare thought ; these truths have not taken on any particular modification or colour from the circumstance that it is a certain man, Euclid, who has given them expression ; any other person who grasped them clearly, would express them in much the same way. Such an assertion cannot be made of Carlyle’s *History of the French Revolution*, or Green’s *History of England* ; other authors than these might embody the same material, and yet give a wholly different impression to the reader. The matter might have taken a different *colour* from the mind of the writer. Now as the student of history is in search of the truth,—the substantial facts—he disregards in as far as possible these modifications which are derived from the mind of the author. But, on the other hand, to the student of literature, whose object is not to know the facts, but the exact mental condition of the writer, it is of prime importance to know not merely the assertions made, but the feelings with which they are regarded, in as far as these are embodied in the language. It is this colour, this human element, that interests him most of all.

Two Kinds of Interpretation in Literature.—In the first place, then, in interpretation, the student of literature has to get at the substantial meaning which the work conveys,—and here he is on common ground with the specialist in the department to which the book belongs,—history, or science, or whatever that department may be. But, in the second place, there may be, beyond this substantial meaning, modifications and colouring imparted by the writer ; these, too, the student of literature must understand ; and here he parts company with the specialist, who gives little heed to such matters. The first stage of interpretation is usually either very simple, or, if difficult, the difficulty arises from the nature of the subject, and can therefore be overcome only by one who possesses knowledge of that particular subject, *i.e.*,

by the specialist. The second stage of interpretation is a much more subtle matter; the difficulties which may arise in various departments are of the same general character, for they lie, not in the matter, but in the *form*,—in the manner of *expression*—and it is in this part of the work that the student of literature finds his special function.

Manner of Expression the Source of Literary Colour.—This modification or colouring is not conveyed by assertions. We are supposing for the moment that the facts—the substantial thought—are given and fixed; yet different writers will cause a different impression as to these facts by *the way in which they put them*. The difference may be illustrated in a slightly different sphere: we can easily imagine a machine made so as successfully to articulate words when air is forced through it; thus the operator might convey thought from his mind to ours. But the effect would be very unlike that produced by the human voice speaking in the ordinary way. In the first case, bare thought would be given; in the second, the same thought modified, illuminated, vivified by the expression, gesture, tones of the living speaker. Now, some recorded thought, a large portion of literature in the wide sense, resembles the utterances of this machine: it conveys ideas—dry statements of facts, as we say: for example, the definitions in *Euclid* or in any other scientific work, are of this character. In these cases, when the substantial meaning of the assertion has been mastered, the work of interpretation is complete. But language may have, in the hands of a skilful writer, a wonderful power of conveying to the reader such modifications and emotional accompaniments as, in ordinary conversation, are given by tone, gesture and play of feature. These effects are not imparted by the actual statements made by the sentences; they are not the substantial thought; they are the modifications and accompaniments of the thought through the form and manner of the expression. Literary study, therefore, is specially concerned with manner or form; just as literature itself consists not of a body of facts—truths transmitted through the minds of living men (as might be the case with science), but of ideas as recorded *in fixed forms of language*.

Literature in its Narrower Sense.—An English translation of the original Greek work of Euclid may serve a mathematician quite as well as the Euclid's own words. No translation of *Homer* can to the same extent suffice the student of literature. The philosophical import of Plato's writings may be represented in English; but its literary import only in a very inadequate fashion. A chapter in Gibbon's history might be reproduced in the words of another man without sacrificing anything of prime importance in the original; no one could re-write in his own language *Morte D'Arthur*, or *Crossing the Bar*, without sacrificing a great deal, or producing something of an altogether different character. The student of literature will therefore find much to engage his interest in the latter cases, and comparatively little in the former. With works made up of bare, dry, unemotional, impersonal statements, the student of literature has but little concern; with works impregnated by the characteristics of the writer, coloured by his personality and his mood, a great deal. While literature may, then, be said to include all recorded thought, the word is used more properly and frequently of recorded thought to which colour is lent from the form or character of the language employed; and these peculiarities of form or expression which serve to carry certain impressions to the mind of the reader in addition to the substantial assertions, are comprised under the name *Style*.

Style.—Style arises, then, from the nature of the thinking and recording mind. The complex atmosphere with which the literary writer surrounds his ideas is evidently the outcome of his personality—hence it has truly been said that ‘The style is the man.’ Every one knows that in real life, many men exercise a power through the impression that their individuality makes upon others. In many speakers, it is not so much what they say, or the language in which they say it, but a something conveyed through the actual presence of the man, that gives force. We speak of men of magnetic, or of winning, or of dominating characters. Such men have the power of bringing their personality to bear upon other men. The power of convey-

ing similar impressions through written language is the specific literary gift. Many persons who have communicated thoughts of great worth through written language, have not possessed this power in any high degree ; and in the treatment of some subjects this power, or rather the exercise of it, is not desirable. As, when a surgeon is performing a delicate operation, it is a positive advantage that his emotional nature, his sympathy, etc., should for the time be in abeyance, in order that his whole energy may be devoted to observation, judgment, the controlling of the muscles, and that the mind may be undisturbed by anything foreign to the success of the operation ; so, the scientific man, dealing with universal abstract truth, is at his best when uninfluenced by his own individual character and feelings, and when his statements of results are also free from these transitory and alien factors. But if such writing is free from the drawbacks, it also lacks the charm, of literary style. There are other writers who, consciously or unconsciously, set an impress on their work through certain peculiarities in expression, and this impress will be recognizable in all their writings, and will serve to differentiate these from the works of others. For example, by such peculiarities persons of literary culture easily determine whether a certain poem is by Tennyson, or by Browning, whether a certain essay is by Macaulay or by Carlyle. The two pieces entitled *The Shrubbery* and *The Poplar Field*, which are contained in this volume, have certain qualities in common—difficult, it may be, to analyse and define—which belong to the style of Cowper, and these serve to connect these two poems and to differentiate them from “Tears, idle tears” and “The splendour falls, etc.,” which in turn have certain qualities in common. These idiosyncrasies of style are something from which the person who possesses them cannot escape, provided he writes naturally ; but there is a higher power of style than this, the power of shaping language, at will, so as to arouse a desired series of feelings or impressions in the reader. So Gray was able to impose a form upon the *Elegy*, to give a character to the style, which serves to stimulate certain vague moods or impressions in keeping with the substantial thought. In the *Lines to Mr. Walpole’s Cat*, the style

is of a different character and begets a quite different series of feelings, although it still has certain qualities in common with the former which mark it as the style of Gray.

Imaginative Literature.—Now there are not only great differences among different men in the power of thus using language effectively, there are equal differences in the power of feeling and appreciating these effects in language. There are people who have no sense for style, as there are people who have no ear for music. It is quite possible for persons who lack this sense, to profit greatly by reading, but it is by reading those books which convey substantial facts or ideas—like works of science or history ; but the more of literary quality a book possesses, the more these readers miss ; from certain sorts of writing they may be said to get nothing at all—and this the very sort of writing which most completely deserves the name of literature. For, as we pass from the outlying provinces of literature, from books which contain an almost colourless expression of facts and ideas, towards the central province of literature proper, we find, at the very heart of the latter, books in which there are not merely modifications and colouring given to facts and thoughts by their passage through the mind of the author, but in which the substance itself springs up in his mind, and is not imposed from the outside, as the facts of history or biography are imposed upon the historian and biographer, and must be accepted by them. So that not the style only, but the matter may bear the impress of the writer's mind. Works of this character are called imaginative, being the product of the imagination of the writer ; and just because the personal element is here the most important factor, these works are, above all, the special field of the student of literature. The grasping of the substantial thought, of the statements directly conveyed are everything, we may say, in reading *Euclid*, or a text-book on chemistry ; and, if not everything, at least the main thing in reading Gibbon's history of the later years of the Roman Empire : but a very small matter, indeed, in reading *Morte D'Arthur* or *Crossing the Bar*. The facts in the life of Cromwell are worth knowing, whatever be the character of the medium through which they are conveyed ; one can

scarcely say as much of the facts of the life of an imaginary Hamlet or Adam Bede.

Imaginative Interpretation. — In order to receive anything of high value from these more purely literary works, we must complete the work of interpretation, and not merely grasp the substantial development of the thought, but also must, in some measure, reproduce within ourselves the emotional and imaginative states of the author. In the case of *Crossing the Bar*, for example, the reader who possesses adequate literary sense, experiences, through the combined effects of the statements, imagery, suggestion, and rhythm of the poem, the highly complex mental and emotional condition in which the poet contemplates the approach of death—a state of mind noble and beautiful, hence desirable, and even enjoyable. Note that here literature not merely affords us information, and sets us thinking; it also enables us, in a measure, to live through an experience. This is specially the function of that large part of literature which represents imaginary life and character, as the drama, the novel, the epic. The author conceives persons and events,—sees them with the mind's eye, thinks the thoughts of the characters, lives their lives. The things thus conceived he represents through language; and the reader taking the symbols interprets them again into mental pictures, into thoughts, and into feelings; and, thus, as it were, enlarges his own experience. Interpretation of this sort is largely the work of Imagination.

Imagination. — The highest forms of literature bring into play the imagination even more than the intellect; and it is well that we should have a definite idea of what is meant by imagination, for this word and the related forms are often employed very vaguely in criticism. Fundamentally, imagination is the power of starting, from the *interior* of the brain, mental conditions which are originally produced by influences from the *exterior*, acting upon the organs of the senses, or upon the nerves. So, a beautiful landscape presented to the eye produces a certain mental condition: we see it, have feelings and thoughts about it; on a subsequent occasion when the landscape is not present, the

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vision and its accompanying thoughts and feelings may, without the external stimulus, be revived in a less definite and intense form. This latter is an imaginative experience. Or an artist may conjure up in his consciousness a scene which is not a copy of any particular landscape, but which is, of course, made up of details drawn from actual experience. This is a higher exercise of imagination. Lady Macbeth in sleep smells blood upon her hand; Macbeth sees, as he thinks, the dead Banquo sitting at the feast; this is a very vivid imaginative experience, but an abnormal one, for it deceives the judgment, and is not under the control of the will. So, by imagination, not merely objects of sight, but of hearing, smelling, etc., may be evoked in the brain; and in like manner, any sort of physical feeling, or any emotional state,—fear, joy, etc. Thus, we may pass through almost all the possible experiences of actual life, though in a vaguer and less intense fashion. The power of imaginatively reviving past experiences is universal; on the other hand, the power of conceiving concrete experiences which possess a high measure of novelty, is a much rarer gift. Persons possessed of imagination in its most striking manifestations, are able to conceive novel characters, scenes, situations, events, with great vividness, and these of a highly interesting and beautiful kind. If to this power of conceiving, the person adds the power of representing his conceptions in some medium—language, colour, sound,—so that they may be easily reproduced in others, he has the qualifications of a great artist, be it poet, painter or musician. Such is the power which Shakespeare so astonishingly manifests in his plays; and no one has completed the work of understanding those plays—the work of literary interpretation—until he has, not merely grasped the series of events, the ideas expressed and so on, but has also imaginatively entered into them and lived, as it were, through them. Any one can easily comprehend the difference both in kind and in degree between the impression produced upon a comparatively illiterate person through the reading of *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, and the impression produced upon the same person through seeing the same plays well enacted on the stage. In the latter case, the scenery, the personality of the actors, their rendering of their parts contribute

a very large share to the imaginative work required for understanding the text of the drama. Now, there is a difference of the same sort, and quite as great in degree, between the impression produced by the reading of *any* piece of imaginative literature,—not merely plays and novels, but such pieces as *Crossing the Bar*, “*Tears, idle tears*,” or *Ulysses*—upon a person who merely has an intellectual understanding of the piece (such as would be amply sufficient in a passage from most scientific works) and upon the skilful student of literature, who completes the work of interpretation through his imagination.

It may be noted in passing that not merely fiction but reality may be imaginatively treated by writer or reader. Carlyle in his *French Revolution* narrates the facts in such a way as to stimulate the reader's imagination and to enable him to enter into the life depicted. An historian like Prof. S. R. Gardiner, on the other hand, writes, in the main, to convey accurate information to the intellect, not to quicken his reader's realization of the past as actual. Unfortunately, but naturally enough, the imaginative writer of history is apt to be inaccurate; the very accurate writer, unimaginative; so that the reader encounters either what is false or what is dry. But poets, dramatists, and novelists, who have their facts in their own control, may, without falsifying them, shape them to their own purpose; and that purpose primarily is that the reader should, as fully and intensely as the limits of imagination permit, enter into the experiences depicted.

II.

Results of the Study of Literature.

Three Results of Education. Any study that has educational value confers Knowledge, Discipline, or Culture. It is desirable that the memory should be stored with facts and ideas,—that is, with *Knowledge*; that each faculty should be trained to do easily and well that which it is designed to do,—such training is *Discipline*; that a man should have *all* his faculties harmoniously developed, so that he shall realize to the fullest extent all the possibilities of his nature—that is

Culture. These three things cannot be definitely separated; they run into one another; particularly between the second and the third no line can be accurately drawn. It is not in their processes that discipline and culture are unlike, but in their aims and their points of view. Discipline regards the man as a means to an end; it seeks to bring a faculty into the highest state of efficiency for the production of some external result—in order that the man may make good watches, or horse-shoes, or may add to the store of human knowledge, or heal disease, or direct and guide large bodies of men, etc.; but in developing him into an extremely efficient artizan, or investigator, or physician, or statesman, his perfection as a man may, quite possibly, be sacrificed. Discipline may produce an extraordinarily useful member of society; yet the individual regarded in and for himself, may be a very limited and monstrous specimen of humanity; whereas culture regards the man in and for himself, not as the producer of something outside of himself.

Knowledge Resulting from the Study of Literature.—Let us consider, then, what is the educational value of the study of literature—especially as it is pursued in schools—in each of these three respects; and first as regards knowledge. Since literature, as we have seen, includes all books, and books are the chief repositories of ascertained knowledge, the study of literature in its widest sense ought to bestow extensive and varied information; this information, however, is likely to be miscellaneous and unsystematic; and such knowledge is not for practical purposes very effective; but it widens one's interests, it enlarges the mental vision, it adds to the happiness and dignity of life—that is it contributes to culture. Knowledge which is to be practically effective should be profound and systematic—knowledge acquired by scientific, not by literary, methods. Indeed, as has been pointed out in considering the nature of literary study, the facts embodied are, to the student of literature, of merely secondary importance. And, if we take literature in its narrower and proper sense, little positive information is gained from familiarity with it. The study of the *Selections* in this volume will manifestly not give nearly as much positive knowledge as the same amount of mental effort employed on a text-book in science or

history. Definite knowledge is not the strong point in the study of literature; yet as knowledge is the most obvious and easily comprehended result of education, there is a popular tendency to emphasize and make much of it. Hence the undue stress usually put upon the annotation of literary texts, because notes give a definite information. For the genuine study of literature, however, annotation is valuable only in so far as it enables the reader to understand the text better, to enter more completely into the writer's mind. Apart from this service its value is small. Unorganized knowledge,—the disconnected scraps of history, science, biography, etc., which we find in notes—is, compared with systematic knowledge, meaningless and useless, and little likely to be retained by the memory.

But there is a sort of knowledge obtained from the study of literature,—of literature, too, in its most proper and narrow sense,—which though often overlooked, is of great value, viz., the concrete knowledge of human nature and of life. The knowledge which science gives is abstract and generalized; it is derived and artificial, built up upon another sort of knowledge altogether, viz., concrete knowledge,—the knowledge of things as we see them and of experiences as we actually have them. We have never had any experience of 'a triangle' as mathematically defined, nor of 'a German' in the abstract, nor of 'force' in general, but always of certain individual things to which we apply these names. A critic makes, let us say, a true general statement with regard to the style of Tennyson; a reader with a genuine appreciation of literature, but with no tendency or need to analyze his impressions, may be thoroughly familiar with Tennyson's poetry, and hence with this peculiarity of style, and yet never have thought of this general truth. His knowledge is, notwithstanding, really more accurate and fuller than that conveyed by the critic's statement. A writer makes an assertion (as true, let us suppose, as such assertions can be) in regard to the German national character; a keen observer who has lived much in Germany, may have a much more accurate and fuller acquaintance with Germans, and yet be quite incapable of making this generalization for himself. This is not said to disparage

general knowledge,—which is from another point of view the higher,—but to draw attention to the differences between scientific and concrete knowledge, and to the fact that, from certain points of view, the latter is the truer and the more useful. Especially is concrete knowledge essential, when action is needful. Physicians acquire certain general principles, but the thing that makes the successful practitioner is the knowledge that comes from experience,—from having observed keenly a large number of individual cases. This knowledge directly suggests the treatment of the new case without the conscious intervention of any generalization. Could the knowledge of the skilful practitioner be generalized, it might be transmitted to another physician entire; but this is not so; the skill dies with the man. So, the teacher whose dealings with his pupils are based solely on the generalizations of psychology or of educational experience, can never succeed. Success depends mainly on the concrete knowledge which enables him to act upon the spur of the moment, through intuition, not through any process of general reasoning. “Histories,” says Bacon in his pregnant essay, *Of Studies*, “make men wise”; and that is because they deal with men, not abstractly, but as individuals acting as we see them acting in real life. The best imaginative literature, for a like reason, makes men wise. The most characteristic knowledge which literature affords is of the same concrete nature as that which is given by actual contact with men and things. The person who is familiar with Shakespeare’s dramas gains a direct knowledge of and insight into human nature such as no scientific treatise can give him—a knowledge which may supplement the necessarily limited experience of any individual. Hence the real worth of novels; they widen our limited observation of concrete men and women, and the way in which they live. In the best literature, as has been indicated in what is said of style, we come almost into personal contact with great men, the writers themselves; in imaginative literature, we widen our experience of life.

The Discipline Imparted by Literature. As to discipline: the study of literature of course disciplines many faculties, but this discipline has its value from the point of view of culture, rather than because it

leads up directly to any external end. There are, however, one or two valuable results for practical purposes arising from the discipline afforded by the study of literature. In the first place, this study, above any other, teaches us how to read, familiarizes us with books, enables us to grasp their meaning accurately, fully, and readily; and this is one of the best practical preparations for after life, because through books is one of the chief and most accessible avenues to knowledge. Everyone has noted the disadvantage under which the ill-taught reader labours, who painfully plods his way along the printed page with finger following each word. But it is not so often noted how people with a fair amount of education labour under a similar disadvantage to a smaller degree; they find the reading of anything but the lightest literature a heavy task; and when they do read, fail to grasp adequately the import of the passage. Such people may follow a lecturer with ease and pleasure; they are accustomed to oral communications; the speaker's personality, his tone, give light and vividness to the subject. But, as we have seen, the personality of the writer may be felt through the written word also by him whose literary faculty has been trained. The study of literature properly pursued affords the specific training needful for facility in mastering of written thought, forms the habit of reading, and instils a taste for books. It is this power and taste which alone, in most cases, render it possible that the mental culture begun at school may be continued in later life, and that the narrow limits of acquired knowledge may be widened. It need scarcely be added that the study of literature is an important instrument for the highly practical purpose of developing the power of expression: furnishing, as it does, a wide vocabulary, a store of phrases and sentence-forms, an accurate appreciation of the meaning and uses of words which is essential to the clear and effective utterance of one's own thoughts in speaking and writing.

Literature as an Instrument of Culture.—But it is above all as an instrument and source of culture, that literature is eminent among the studies of a school curriculum. Its especial value is not practical; it does not contribute so directly as many other studies towards enabling

a man to make a livelihood ; its value lies in the fact that it tends to elevate and broaden the inner life : to give wider interests, breadth of view, openness of mind, loftier sources of pleasure. It is such qualities as these that we connect with culture ; as we connect the ideas of narrowness, one-sidedness, smallness and pettiness, and lack of internal resource with its opposite. Imagine a man who has spent his whole life in some small, secluded, and backward community, who has never travelled or seen other phases of life, whose intercourse has been confined to persons hedged in by the same limitations as himself, whose education has been elementary, and who is unfamiliar with books. Such a man may naturally possess good ability, certain parts of his nature may have been disciplined by the practical work of life. He may be very skilful in his business, and a very useful member of society ; but his knowledge will inevitably be small, his basis for forming judgments of men and events outside his small familiar sphere utterly inadequate, his sympathies contracted, his inner resources few, his whole life and nature dwarfed. In short, he will not be a man of culture. Imagine a man of similar endowments whose life has brought him into close contact with a great many different social conditions, who has seen and mingled with the world, with all sorts and conditions of men, who has lived on terms of familiarity with many great minds. Such a man could scarcely escape that general stimulation of his whole nature which we call culture. Now, observe that the man who has a taste for literature, as literature, and possesses a wide familiarity with books, is in much the same position as this second imaginary individual. He is familiar with a great range of ideas—not limited to any one department of thought but belonging to many, especially to those which treat most directly of human life. He has come into contact with a number of the greatest men who have ever lived, the great writers, namely ; has not merely learned what they have thought, but through the power of style has come under the influence of their personality. He has become acquainted with the life and manner of thinking in communities unlike his own—in distant ages and countries. In imaginative literature he has lived through a vast range of emotional experiences, has entered

sympathetically into characters and lives remote from his own— has, in a fashion at least, passed through numberless possibilities of human experience. All this must inevitably give culture. The lives of the majority of men are narrow ; in new countries like our own, the variety and range of interest in most communities is small ; but in literature we have an instrument within the reach of every one who has received an elementary literary training at school, and an instrument for developing every side of our nature, moral, emotional, intellectual.

POEMS_c

GRAY.

ODE ON THE SPRING.

Lo ! where the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Fair Venus' train, appear,
Disclose the long-expecting flowers
And wake the purple year !
The Attic warbler pours her throat 5
Responsive to the cuckoo's note,
The untaught harmony of Spring:
While, whispering pleasure as they fly,
Cool Zephyrs thro' the clear blue sky
Their gather'd fragrance fling. 10

Where'er the oak's thick branches stretch
A broader, browner shade,
Where'er the rude and moss-grown beech
O'er-canopies the glade,
Beside some water's rushy brink 15
With me the muse shall sit, and think
(At ease reclined in rustic state)
How vain the ardour of the crowd,
How low, how little are the proud,
How indigent the great ! 20

Still is the toiling hand of Care ;
The panting herds repose :
Yet hark, how thro' the peopled air
The busy murmur glows !

The insect-youth are on the wing, 25
Eager to taste the honied spring
And float amid the liquid noon :
Some lightly o'er the current skim,
Some show their gaily-gilded trim
Quick-glancing to the sun. 30

To Contemplation's sober eye
Such is the race of Man :
And they that creep, and they that fly,
Shall end where they began.
Alike the Busy and the Gay 35
But flutter thro' life's little day,
In Fortune's varying colours drest :
Brush'd by the hand of rough Mischance
Or chill'd by Age, their airy dance
They leave, in dust to rest. 40

Methinks I hear in accents low
The sportive kind reply :
Poor moralist ! and what art thou ?
A solitary fly !
Thy joys no glittering female meets, 45
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
No painted plumage to display :
On hasty wings thy youth is flown ;
Thy sun is set, thy spring is gone—
We frolic while 'tis May. 50

ODE ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF ETON
COLLEGE.

Ye distant spires, ye antique towers
That crown the watery glade,
Where grateful Science still adores
Her Henry's holy shade ;
And ye, that from the stately brow 5
Of Windsor's heights th' expanse below
Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey,
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
Wanders the hoary Thames along
His silver-winding way : 10

Ah happy hills ! ah pleasing shade !
Ah fields beloved in vain !
Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
A stranger yet to pain !
I feel the gales that from ye blow 15
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving fresh their gladsome wing
My weary soul they seem to soothe,
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring. 20

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race
Disporting on thy margent green
The paths of pleasure trace ;
Who foremost now delight to cleave 25
With pliant arm, thy glassy wave ?
The captive linnet which enthral ?
What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed
Or urge the flying ball ? 30

Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
And Shame that sculks behind :
Or pining Love shall waste their youth, 65
Or Jealousy with rankling tooth
That inly gnaws the secret heart,
And Envy wan, and faded Care,
Grim-visaged comfortless Despair,
And Sorrow's piercing dart. 70

Ambition this shall tempt to rise,
Then whirl the wretch from high
To bitter Scorn a sacrifice
And grinning Infamy.
'The stings of Falsehood those shall try 75
And hard Unkindness' alter'd eye,
That mocks the tear it forced to flow ;
And keen Remorse with blood defiled,
And moody Madness laughing wild
Amid severest woe. 80

Lo, in the vale of years beneath
A griesly troop are seen,
The painful family of Death,
More hideous than their queen :
This racks the joints, this fires the veins, 85
That every labouring sinew strains,
Those in the deeper vitals rage :
Lo ! Poverty, to fill the band,
That numbs the soul with icy hand,
And slow-consuming Age. 90

To each his sufferings : all are men,
Condemn'd alike to groan ;
The tender for another's pain,
Th' unfeeling for his own.

Yet, ah ! why should they know their fate, 95
 Since sorrow never comes too late,
 And happiness too swiftly flies ?
 Thought would destroy their paradise.
 No more ;—where ignorance is bliss,
 'Tis folly to be wise. 100

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
 The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
 The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight, 5
 And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
 Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
 And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds :

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
 The moping owl does to the moon complain 10
 Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade
 Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
 Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, 15
 The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
 The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
 The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
 No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. 20

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn
 Or busy housewife ply her evening care :
 No children run to lisp their sire's return,
 Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield, 25
 Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke ;
 How jocund did they drive their team afield !
 How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke !

Let not ambition mock their useful toil, 30
 Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;
 Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
 The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave
 Await alike th' inevitable hour :— 35
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault
 If memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
 Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. 40

Can storied urn or animated bust
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath ?
 Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
 Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death ?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid 45
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire ;
 Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
 Or waked to extasy the living lyre :

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll ; 50
Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear :
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, 55
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood. 60

Th' applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes

Their lot forbad : nor circumscribed alone 65
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined ;
Forbad to wade thro' slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind ;

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame, 70
Or heap the shrine of luxury and pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray ;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life 75
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. 80

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply :
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey, 85
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind ?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires ; 90
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate ;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led, 95
Some kindred spirit shall enquire thy fate,—

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn ; 100

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noon-tide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

- ‘ Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn, 105
 Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove ;
 Now drooping, woeful-wan, like one forlorn,
 Or crazed with care, or cross’d in hopeless love.
- ‘ One morn I miss’d him on the custom’d hill,
 Along the heath, and near his favourite tree ; 110
 Another came ; nor yet beside the rill,
 Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he ;
- ‘ The next with dirges due in sad array
 Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne,—
 Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay 115
 Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.’

THE EPITAPH.

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
 A youth, to fortune and to fame unknown ;
 Fair science frown’d not on his humble birth
 And melancholy mark’d him for her own. 120

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere ;
 Heaven did a recompense as largely send :
 He gave to misery (all he had) a tear,
 He gain’d from Heaven (’twas all he wish’d) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose, 125
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
 (There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
 The bosom of his Father and his God.

ODE ON THE PLEASURE ARISING FROM
VICISSITUDE.

Now the golden Morn aloft
Waves her dew-bespangled wing,
With vermeil cheek and whisper soft
She woos the tardy Spring :
Till April starts, and calls around 5
The sleeping fragrance from the ground,
And lightly o'er the living scene
Scatters his freshest, tenderest green.

New-born flocks, in rustic dance,
Frisking ply their feeble feet ; 10
Forgetful of their wintry trance
The birds his presence greet :
But chief, the sky-lark warbles high
His trembling thrilling ecstasy ;
And lessening from the dazzled sight, 15
Melts into air and liquid light.

Yesterday the sullen year
Saw the snowy whirlwind fly ;
Mute was the music of the air,
The herd stood drooping by : 20
Their raptures now that wildly flow
No yesterday nor morrow know ;
'Tis Man alone that joy describes
With forward and reverted eyes.

Smiles on past misfortune's brow 25
Soft reflection's hand can trace,
And o'er the cheek of sorrow throw
A melancholy grace ;

While hope prolongs our happier hour,
Or deepest shades, that dimly lour 30
And blacken round our weary way,
Gilds with a gleam of distant day.

Still, where rosy pleasure leads,
See a kindred grief pursue ;
Behind the steps that misery treads 35
Approaching comfort view :
The hues of bliss more brightly glow
Chastised by sabler tints of woe,
And blended form, with artful strife,
The strength and harmony of life. 40

See the wretch that long has tost
On the thorny bed of pain,
At length repair his vigour lost
And breathe and walk again :
The meanest floweret of the vale, 45
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening Paradise.

COWPER.

THE SHRUBBERY.

O happy shades ! to me unblest !
 Friendly to peace, but not to me !
How ill the scene that offers rest,
 And heart that cannot rest, agree !

This glassy stream, that spreading pine, 5
 Those alders quivering to the breeze,
Might soothe a soul less hurt than mine,
 And please, if anything could please.

But fix'd unalterable Care
 Foregoes not what she feels within, 10
Shows the same sadness everywhere,
 And slights the season and the scene.

For all that pleased in wood or lawn
 While Peace possess'd these silent bowers,
Her animating smile withdrawn, 15
 Has lost its beauties and its powers.

The saint or moralist should tread
 This moss-grown alley, musing, slow,
They seek like me the secret shade,
 But not, like me, to nourish woe ! 20

Me, fruitful scenes and prospects waste
 Alike admonish not to roam ;
These tell me of enjoyments past,
 And those of sorrows yet to come.

THE POPLAR FIELD.

The poplars are fell'd ; farewell to the shade
 And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade ;
 The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
 Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elapsed since I first took a view 5
 Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew :
 And now in the grass behold they are laid,
 And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade !

The blackbird has fled to another retreat
 Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat : 10
 And the scene where his melody charm'd me before
 Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

My fugitive years are all hasting away,
 And I must ere long lie as lowly as they.
 With a turf on my breast and a stone on my head, 15
 Ere another such grove shall rise in its stead.

The change both my heart and my fancy employs :
 I reflect on the frailty of man and his joys :
 Short-lived as we are, yet our pleasures, we see,
 Have a still shorter date, and die sooner than we. 20

TO MARY UNWIN.

Mary ! I want a lyre with other strings,
 Such aid from Heaven as some have feign'd they drew,
 An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new
 And undebased by praise of meaner things,

That ere through age or woe I shed my wings 5
 I may record thy worth with honour due,
 In verse as musical as thou art true,
 And that immortalizes whom it sings :—

But thou hast little need. There is a Book
By seraphs writ with beams of heavenly light, 10
On which the eyes of God not rarely look,

A chronicle of actions just and bright—
There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine ;
And since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine.

TO THE SAME.

The twentieth year is well-nigh past
 Since first our sky was overcast ;
 Ah would that this might be the last !
 My Mary !

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow—
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore, **10**
Now rust disused, and shine no more ;
My Mary !

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will, 15
My Mary !

But well thou play'dst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary ! 20

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language utter'd in a dream ;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary !

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright, 25
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary !

For could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see ? 30
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary !

Partakers of thy sad decline
Thy hands their little force resign ;
Yet, gently prest, press gently mine, 35
My Mary !

Such feebleness of limbs thou prov'st
That now at every step thou mov'st
Upheld by two ; yet still thou lov'st,
My Mary ! 40

And still to love, though prest with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary !

But ah ! by constant heed I know 45
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary !

And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past, 50
Thy worn-out heart will break at last—
My Mary !

THE CASTAWAY.

Obscurest night involved the sky,
The Atlantic billows roar'd,
When such a destined wretch as I,
Wash'd headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft, 5
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast
With warmer wishes sent. 10
He loved them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay ;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline, 15
Or courage die away ;
But waged with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted : nor his friends had fail'd
To check the vessel's course, 20
But so the furious blast prevail'd,
That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford ; 25
And such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delay'd not to bestow.
But he (they knew) nor ship nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more. 30

Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
Alone could rescue them ;
Yet bitter felt it still to die 35
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld ;
And so long he, with unspent power,
His destiny repell'd ; 40
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried ' Adieu !'

At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in every blast, 45
Could catch the sound no more ;
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him ; but the page
Of narrative sincere, 50
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear :
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream, 55
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date :
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case. 60

No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone :
But I beneath a rougher sea, 65
And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he.

TENNYSON.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.

When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flow'd back with me,
 The forward-flowing tide of time :
And many a sheeny summer-morn, 5
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old ;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
 For it was in the golden prime 10
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Anight my shallop, rustling thro'
The low and bloomed foliage, drove
The fragrant, glistening deeps, and clove
The citron-shadows in the blue : 15
By garden porches on the brim,
The costly doors flung open wide,
Gold glittering thro' lamplight dim,
And broider'd sofas on each side :
 In sooth it was a goodly time, 20
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Often, where clear-stemm'd platans guard
 The outlet, did I turn away
 The boat-head down a broad canal 25
 From the main river sluiced, where all
 The sloping of the moon-lit sward
 Was damask-work, and deep inlay
 Of braided blooms undown, which crept
 Adown to where the water slept. 30
 A goodly place, a goodly time.
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

A motion from the river won
 Ridged the smooth level, bearing on 35
 My shallop thro' the star-strown calm,
 Until another night in night
 I enter'd, from the clearer light,
 Imbower'd vaults of pillar'd palm,
 Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb 40
 Heavenward were stay'd beneath the dome
 Of hollow boughs.—A goodly time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Still onward ; and the clear canal 45
 Is rounded to as clear a lake.
 From the green rivage many a fall
 Of diamond rillets musical,
 Thro' little crystal arches low
 Down from the central fountain's flow 50
 Fall'n silver-chiming, seemed to shake
 The sparkling flints beneath the prow.
 A goodly place, a goodly time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid. 55

Above thro' many a bowery turn
 A walk with vary-colour'd shells
 Wander'd engrain'd. On either side
 All round about the fragrant marge
 From fluted vase, and brazen urn 60
 In order, eastern flowers large,
 Some dropping low their crimson bells
 Half-closed, and others studded wide
 With disks and tiars, fed the time
 With odour in the golden prime 65
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Far off, and where the lemon grove
 In closest coverture, upsprung,
 The living airs of middle night
 Died round the bullbul as he sung ; 70
 Not he : but something which possess'd
 The darkness of the world, delight,
 Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
 Ceasing not, mingled, unrepress'd,
 Apart from place, withholding time, 75
 But flattering the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Black the garden-bowers and grots
 Slumber'd : the solemn palms were ranged
 Above, unwoo'd of summer wind : 80
 A sudden splendour from behind
 Flush'd all the leaves with rich gold-green,
 And, flowing rapidly between
 Their interspaces, counterchanged
 The level lake with diamond-plots 85
 Of dark and bright. A lovely time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

- Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,
 Distinct with vivid stars inlaid, 90
 Grew darker from that under-flame :
 So, leaping lightly from the boat,
 With silver anchor left afloat,
 In marvel whence that glory came
 Upon me, as in sleep I sank 95
 In cool soft turf upon the bank,
 Entranced with that place and time,
 So worthy of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.
- Thence thro' the garden I was drawn— 100
 A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
 And many a shadow-chequer'd lawn
 Full of the city's stilly sound,
 And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round
 The stately cedar, tamarisks, 105
 Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
 Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
 Graven with emblems of the time,
 In honour of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid. 110
- With dazed vision unawares
 From the long alley's latticed shade
 Emerged, I came upon the great
 Pavilion of the Cāliphāt.
 Right to the carven cedarn doors, 115
 Flung inward over spangled floors,
 Broad-based flights of marble stairs,
 Ran up with golden balustrade,
 After the fashion of the time,
 And humour of the golden prime 120
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

The fourscore windows all alight
 As with the quintessence of flame,
 A million tapers flaring bright
 From twisted silvers look'd to shame 125
 The hollow-vaulted dark, and stream'd
 Upon the mooned domes aloof
 In inmost Bagdat, till there seem'd
 Hundreds of crescents on the roof
 Of night new-risen, that marvellous time 130
 To celebrate the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Then stole I up, and trancedly
 Gazed on the Persian girl alone,
 Serene with argent-lidded eyes 135
 Amorous, and lashes like to rays
 Of darkness, and a brow of pearl
 Tressed with redolent ebony,
 In many a dark delicious curl,
 Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone ; 140
 The sweetest lady of the time,
 Well worthy of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Six columns, three on either side,
 Pure silver, underpropt a rich 145
 Throne of the massive ore, from which
 Down-droop'd, in many a floating fold,
 Engarlanded and diaper'd
 With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.
 Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirr'd 150
 With merriment of kingly pride,
 Sole star of all that place and time,
 I saw him—in his golden prime,
 THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID.

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly 30
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to tower'd Camelot :
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers 'Tis the fairy 35
 Lady of Shalott.'

PART II.

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay 40
 To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott. 45

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot : 50
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
 Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad, 55
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,

Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
 Goes by to tower'd Camelot ;
 And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
 The knights come riding two and two :
 She hath no loyal knight and true,
 The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights, 65
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot :
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed ; 70
' I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily 85
As he rode down to Camelot :

And from his blazon'd baldric slung
 A mighty silver bugle hung,
 And as he rode his armour rung,
 Beside remote Shalott. 90

All in the blue unclouded weather
 Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
 The helmet and the helmet-feather
 Burn'd like one burning flame together,
 As he rode down to Camelot. 95
 As often thro' the purple night,
 Below the starry clusters bright,
 Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
 Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd ; 100
 On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode ;
 From underneath his helmet flow'd
 His coal-black curls as on he rode,
 As he rode down to Camelot.
 From the bank and from the river 105
 He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
 'Tirra lirra,' by the river
 Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
 She made three paces thro' the room, 110
 She saw the water-lily bloom,
 She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She look'd down to Camelot.
 Out flew the web and floated wide ;
 The mirror crack'd from side to side ; 115
 'The curse is come upon me,' cried
 The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
 The pale yellow woods were waning,
 The broad stream in his banks complaining, 120
 Heavily the low sky raining

Over tower'd Camelot ;

Down she came and found a boat
 Beneath a willow left afloat,
 And round about the prow she wrote 125

The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
 Like some bold seër in a trance,
 Seeing all his own mischance—
 With a glassy countenance 130

Did she look to Camelot.

And at the closing of the day
 She loosed the chain and down she lay ;
 The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott. 135

Lying, robed in snowy white
 That loosely flew to left and right—
 The leaves upon her falling light—
 Thro' the noises of the night
 She floated down to Camelot : 140

And as the boat-head wound along
 The willowy hills and fields among,
 They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy, 145
 Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
 Till her blood was frozen slowly,

And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide 150
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery, 155
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.

Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame, 160
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer; 165
And they crossed themselves for fear,

All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, 'She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace, 170
The Lady of Shalott.'

CENONE.

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
 Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
 The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
 Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
 And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand 5
 The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
 Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
 The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
 In cataract after cataract to the sea.
 Behind the valley topmost Gargarus 10
 Stands up and takes the morning : but in front
 The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
 Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
 The crown of Troas.
 Hither came at noon 15
 Mournful CEnone, wandering forlorn
 Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
 Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
 - Floated her hair or seemed to float in rest.
 She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine, 20
 Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
 Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

' O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 For now the noon-day quiet holds the hill : 25
 The grasshopper is silent in the grass :
 The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
 Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
 The purple flower droops : the golden bee
 Is lily-cradled : I alone awake. 30

My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

‘O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die. 35
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crown’d snake ! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls 40
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather’d shape : for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

‘O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida, 45
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark.
And dewy dark aloft the mountain pine :
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris, 50
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn’d, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call’d me from the cleft :
Far up the solitary morning smote 55
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone : white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved ; a leopard skin
Droop’d from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Cluster’d about his temples like a God’s : 60
And his cheek brighten’d as the foam-bow brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

‘ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm 65
 Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
 That smelt ambrosially, and while I look’d
 And listen’d, the full-flowing river of speech
 Came down upon my heart.

“ My own CEnone, 70
 Beautiful-brow’d CEnone, my own soul,
 Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingravn
 ‘ For the most fair,’ would seem to award it thine,
 As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
 The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace 75
 Of movement, and the charm of married brows.”

‘ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
 And added “ This was cast upon the board,
 When all the full-faced presence of the Gods 80
 Ranged in the halls of Peleus ; whereupon
 Rose feud, with question unto whom ’twere due :
 But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
 Delivering, that to me, by common voice
 Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day, 85
 Pallas and Aphroditè, claiming each
 This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
 Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
 Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
 Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.” 90

‘ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 It was the deep midnight : one silvery cloud
 Had lost his way between the piney sides
 Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
 Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower, 95
 And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,

Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
 Lotus and lilies : and a wind arose,
 And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
 This way and that, in many a wild festoon 100
 Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
 With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
 And o'er him flowed a golden cloud, and lean'd 105
 Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
 Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom
 Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
 Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
 Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made 110
 Proffer of royal power, ample rule
 Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue
 Wherewith to embellish state, “from many a vale
 And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,
 Or labour'd mine undrainable of ore. 115
 Honour,” she said, “and homage, tax and toll,
 From many an inland town and haven large,
 Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
 In glassy bays among her tallest towers.”

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die. 120
 Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
 “Which in all action is the end of all ;
 Power fitted to the season ; wisdom-bred
 And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
 Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand 125
 Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
 From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born,
 A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
 Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power

Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd 130
 Rest in a happy place, and quiet seats
 Above the thunder, with undying bliss
 In knowledge of their own supremacy."

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit 135
 Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power
 Flatter'd his spirit ; but Pallas where she stood
 Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
 O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
 Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold, 140
 The while, above, her full and earnest eye
 Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
 Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

— "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign power. 145
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,
 Acting the law we live by without fear ;
 And, because right is right, to follow right
 Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence." 150

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Again she said : " I woo thee not with gifts.
 Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
 To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
 So shalt thou find me fairest. 155

Yet, indeed,
 If gazing on divinity disrobed
 Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
 Unbias'd by self-profit, oh ! rest thee sure
 That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee, 160
 So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,

Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
 To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
 Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
 Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will, 165
 Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
 Commeasure perfect freedom."

 ' Here she ceas'd,
 And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, " O Paris,
 Give it to Pallas !" but he heard me not, 170
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me !

 ' O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Idalian Aphroditè beautiful,
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells, 175
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew
 From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
 Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
 And shoulder : from the violets her light foot
 Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form 180
 Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

 ' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
 The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh, 185
 Half-whisper'd in his ear, " I promise thee
 The fairest and most loving wife in Greece,"
 She spoke and laugh'd : I shut my sight for fear :
 But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
 And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes, 190
 As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
 And I was left alone within the bower ;
 And from that time to this I am alone,
 And I shall be alone until I die.

‘ Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die. 195
 Fairest – why fairest wife? am I not fair?
 My love hath told me so a thousand times.
 Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
 When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
 Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail 200
 Crouch’d fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
 Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
 Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest
 Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
 Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains 205
 Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
 My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
 High over the blue gorge, and all between 210
 The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
 Foster’d the callow eaglet—from beneath
 Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
 The panther’s roar came muffled, while I sat
 Low in the valley. Never, never more 215
 Shall lone Enone see the morning mist
 Sweep thro’ them : never see them over-laid
 With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
 Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die. 220
 I wish that somewhere in the ruin’d folds,
 Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
 Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her
 The Abominable, that uninvited came
 Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall, 225
 And cast the golden fruit upon the board,

And bred this change ; that I might speak my mind,
 And tell her to her face how much I hate
 Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die. 230
 Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
 In this green valley, under this green hill,
 Ev’n on this hand, and sitting on this stone ?
 Seal’d it with kisses ? water’d it with tears ?
 O happy tears, and how unlike to these ! 235
 O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face ?
 O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight ?
 O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
 There are enough unhappy on this earth,
 Pass by the happy souls, that love to live : 240
 I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
 And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
 Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
 Weigh heavy on my eyelids : let me die.

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die. 245
 I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
 Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
 Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
 Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
 Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see 250
 My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
 Conjectures of the features of her child
 Ere it is born : her child !—a shudder comes
 Across me : never child be born of me,
 Unblest, to vex me with his father’s eyes ! 255

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
 Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me

Walking the cold and starless road of Death
 Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love 260
 With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
 Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
 Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
 A fire dances before her, and a sound
 Rings ever in her ears of armed men. 265
 What this may be I know not, but I know
 That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
 All earth and air seem only burning fire.'

THE LOTOS-EATERS.

'Courage!' he said, and pointed toward the land.
 'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.'
 In the afternoon they came unto a land
 In which it seemed always afternoon.
 All round the coast the languid air did swoon, 5
 Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
 Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
 And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
 Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

 A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke, 10
 Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go:
 And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
 Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
 They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
 From the inner land: far off, three mountain tops, 15
 Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
 Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
 Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
 In the red West : thro' mountain clefts the dale 20
 Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
 Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
 And meadow, set with slender galingale ;
 A land where all things always seemed the same !
 And round about the keel with faces pale, 25
 Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
 The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
 Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
 To each, but whoso did receive of them, 30
 And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
 Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
 On alien shores ; and if his fellow spake,
 His voice was thin, as voices from the grave ;
 And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake, 35
 And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
 Between the sun and moon upon the shore ;
 And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
 Of child, and wife, and slave ; but ever-more 40
 Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
 Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
 Then some one said, ' We will return no more : '
 And all at once they sang, ' Our island home
 Is far beyond the wave : we will no longer roam.' 45

CHORIC SONG.

I.

There is sweet music here that softer falls
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls

Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass ;
 Music that gentlier on the spirit lies, 50
 Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes ;
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
 Here are cool mosses deep,
 And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
 And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep, 55
 And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II.

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
 And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
 While all things else have rest from weariness ?
 All things have rest : why should we toil alone, 60
 We only toil, who are the first of things,
 And make perpetual moan,
 Still from one sorrow to another thrown :
 Nor ever fold our wings,
 And cease from wanderings, 65
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm ;
 Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
 ' There is no joy but calm !'
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things ?

III.

Lo ! in the middle of the wood, 70
 The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
 With winds upon the branch, and there
 Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
 Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
 Nightly dew-fed ; and turning yellow 75
 Falls, and floats adown the air.
 Lo ! sweeten'd with the summer light,
 The full-juiced apple waxing over-mellow,

Drops in a silent autumn night.
 All its allotted length of days, 80
 The flower ripens in its place,
 Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
 Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea. 85
 Death is the end of life ; ah, why
 Should life all labour be ?
 Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
 And in a little while our lips are dumb.
 Let us alone. What is it that will last ? 90
 All things are taken from us, and become
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
 To war with evil ? Is there any peace
 In ever climbing up the climbing wave ? 95
 All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
 In silence ; ripen, fall and cease :
 Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

V.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
 With half-shut eyes ever to seem 100
 Falling asleep in a half-dream !
 To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
 Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height ;
 To hear each other's whisper'd speech ;
 Eating the Lotos day by day, 105
 To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
 And tender curving lines of creamy spray ;

His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine— 140
 To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
 Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
 Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

VIII.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak : 145
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek :
 All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone :
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
 Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotus-dust
 is blown.
 We have had enough of action, and of motion we, 150
 Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was
 seething free,
 Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains
 in the sea.
 Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
 On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind. 155
 For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
 Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly
 curl'd
 Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming
 world :
 Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
 Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps
 and fiery sands, 160
 Clanging fights, and flaming towns. and sinking ships,
 and praying hands.
 But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song

Where faction seldom gathers head,
 But by degrees to fullness wrought,
 The strength of some diffusive thought 15
 Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute
 Opinion, and induce a time
 When single thought is civil crime,
 And individual freedom mute ; 20

Tho’ Power should make from land to land
 The name of Britain trebly great —
 Tho’ every channel of the State
 Should fill and choke with golden sand—

Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth, 25
 Wild wind ! I seek a warmer sky,
 And I will see before I die
 The palms and temples of the South.

‘OF OLD SAT FREEDOM ON THE HEIGHTS.’

Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
 The thunders breaking at her feet :
 Above her shook the starry lights :
 She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice, 5
 Self-gather’d in her prophet-mind,
 But fragments of her mighty voice
 Came rolling on the wind.

Then stept she down thro’ town and field
 To mingle with the human race, 10
 And part by part to men reveal’d
 The fullness of her face—

Deliver not the tasks of might
To weakness, neither hide the ray
From those, not blind, who wait for day, 15
Tho’ sitting girt with doubtful light.

Make knowledge circle with the winds :
But let her herald, Reverence, fly
Before her to whatever sky
Bear seed of men and growth of minds. 20

Watch what main-currents draw the years :
Cut Prejudice against the grain :
But gentle words are always gain :
Regard the weakness of thy peers :

Nor toil for title, place, or touch 25
Of pension, neither count on praise :
It grows to guerdon after-days :
Nor deal in watch-words overmuch :

Not clinging to some ancient saw :
Not master’d by some modern term : 30
Not swift nor slow to change, but firm :
And in its season bring the law ;

de That from Discussion’s lip may fall
With Life, that, working strongly, binds—
Set in all lights by many minds, 35
To close the interests of all.

For Nature also, cold and warm,
And moist and dry, devising long,
Thro’ many agents making strong,
Matures the individual form. 40

Meet is it changes should control
 Our being, lest we rust in ease.
 We all are changed by still degrees,
 All but the basis of the soul.

So let the change which comes be free 45
 To ingroove itself with that which flies,
 And work, a joint of state, that plies
 Its office, moved with sympathy.

A saying, hard to shape in act :
 For all the past of Time reveals 50
 A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,
 Wherever Thought hath wedded Fact.

Ev'n now we hear with inward strife
 A motion toiling in the gloom—
 The Spirit of the years to come 55
 Yearning to mix himself with Life.

A slow-develop'd strength awaits
 Completion in a painful school ;
 Phantoms of other forms of rule,
 New Majesties of mighty States— 60

The warders of the growing hour,
 But vague in vapour, hard to mark ;
 And round them sea and air are dark
 With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly join'd, 65
 Is bodied forth the second whole.
 Regard gradation, lest the soul
 Of Discord race the rising wind ;

A wind to puff your idol-fires,
And heap their ashes on the head ; 70
To shame the boast so often made,
That we are wiser than our sires.

Oh yet, if Nature's evil star
Drive men in manhood, as in youth,
To follow flying steps of Truth 75
Across the brazen bridge of war—

If New and Old, disastrous feud,
Must ever shock, like armed foes,
And this be true, till Time shall close,
That Principles are rain'd in blood ; 80

Not yet the wise of heart would cease
To hold his hope thro' shame and guilt,
But with his hand against the hilt,
Would pace the troubled land, like Peace ;

Not less, tho' dogs of Faction bay, 85
Would serve his kind in deed and word,
Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,
That knowledge takes the sword away—

Would love the gleams of good that broke
From either side, nor veil his eyes : 90
And if some dreadful need should rise
Would strike, and firmly, and one stroke :

To-morrow yet would reap to-day,
As we bear blossom of the dead ;
Earn well the thrifty months, nor wed 95
Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.

THE EPIC.

At Francis Allen's on the Christmas-eve.—
 The game of forfeits done —the girls all kiss'd
 Beneath the sacred bush and past away—
 The parson Holmes, the poet Everard Hall,
 The host, and I sat round the wassail-bowl, 5
 Then half-way ebb'd : and there we held a talk,
 How all the old honour had from Christmas gone,
 Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd games
 In some odd nooks like this ; till I, tired out
 With cutting eights that day upon the pond, 10
 Where, three times slipping from the outer edge,
 I bump'd the ice into three several stars,
 Fell in a doze : and half-awake I heard
 The parson taking wide and wider sweeps,
 Now harping on the church-commissioners, 15
 Now hawking at Geology and schism ;
 Until I woke, and found him settled down
 Upon the general decay of faith
 Right thro' the world, 'at home was little left.
 And none abroad : there was no anchor, none, 20
 To hold by.' Francis, laughing, clapt his hand
 On Everard's shoulder, with 'I hold by him.'
 'And I,' quoth Everard, 'by the wassail-bowl.'
 'Why yes,' I said, 'we knew your gift that way
 At college : but another which you had, 25
 I mean of verse (for so we held it then),
 What came of that?' 'You know,' said Frank, 'he burnt
 His epic, his King Arthur, some twelve books'—
 And then to me demanding why? 'Oh, sir,
 He thought that nothing new was said, or else 30
 Something so said 'twas nothing—that a truth

Looks freshest in the fashion of the day :
 God knows : he has a mint of reasons : ask.
 It pleased *me* well enough.' 'Nay, nay,' said Hall,
 'Why take the style of those heroic times ? 35
 For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
 Nor we those times ; and why should any man
 Remodel models ? these twelve books of mine
 Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing-worth,
 Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt.' 'But I,' 40
 Said Francis, 'pick'd the eleventh from this hearth
 And have it : keep a thing, its use will come.
 I hoard it as a sugar-plum for Holmes.'
 He laugh'd, and I, tho' sleepy, like a horse
 That hears the corn-bin open, prick'd my ears ; 45
 For I remember'd Everard's college fame
 When we were Freshmen : then at my request
 He brought it ; and the poet little urged,
 But with some prelude of disparagement,
 Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and aes, 50
 Deep-chested music, and to this result.

MORTE D'ARTHUR.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
 Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
 Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
 Had fallen in Lyonnesse about their Lord,
 King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep, 5
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
 Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,

That stood on a dark strait of barren land. 10
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
‘The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights 15
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls 20
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.

I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho’ Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro’ the helm 25
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake, 30
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row’d across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
And, wheresoever I am sung or told

In aftertime, this also shall be known : 35
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And iling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.’

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
‘It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus, 40
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro’ the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,

Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept 45
 And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
 By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock, 50
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
 And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt : 55
 For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
 Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
 Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
 That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
 This way and that dividing the swift mind, 60
 In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
 Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
 There in the many-knotted waterflags,
 That whistled stiff and dry about the marge. +
 So strode he back slow to the wounded King. 65

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
 'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
 What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
 'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, 70
 And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
 'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
 Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
 Thy fæalty, nor like a noble knight : 75
 For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
 Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.

This is a shameful thing for men to lie,
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing 80
I bid thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt, 85
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud,

' And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth, 90
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done ?
What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand 95
An act unprofitable, against himself ?

The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt ! but were this kept, 100
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, " King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps 105
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."

So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit, 110
And hid Excalibur the second time,

And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :

'What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere : 115

'I heard the water lapping on the crag,

And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :

'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,

Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me ! 120

Authority forgets a dying king,

Laid widow'd of the power in his eye

That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,

For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,

In whom should meet the offices of all, 125

Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;

Either from lust of gold, or like a girl

Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.

Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,

And the third time may prosper, get thee hence : 130

But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,

I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,

And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged

Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword, 135

And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand

Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,

And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,

Seen where the moving isles of winter shock 140

By night, with noises of the northern sea.

So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :

But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 145

Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ?' 150

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men, 155
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 160
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
'My end draws nigh : 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear 165
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere 170
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs. 175

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick !

I fear it is too late, and I shall die.' 180

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.

He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him, like a goad. 185

Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels— 190

And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them ; and descending they were ware 195
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream —by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice an agony 200
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge.'
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens 205
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands.
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud, 210
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood : for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon

Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
 And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops 215
 Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls —
 That made his forehead like a rising sun
 High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust ;
 Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
 Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips. 220
 So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
 From spur to plume a star of tournament,
 Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
 Before the eyes of ladies and of kings. 225

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
 ' Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
 Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
 For now I see the true old times are dead,
 When every morning brought a noble chance, 230
 And every chance brought out a noble knight.
 Such times have been not since the light that led
 The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
 But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
 Which was an image of the mighty world ; 235
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,
 And the days darken round me, and the years,
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge :
 ' The old order changeth, yielding place to new, 240
 And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
 Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done
 May He within Himself make pure ! but thou, 245
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats 250
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God. 255
 But now farewell. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest --if indeed I go—
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
 To the island-valley of Avilion;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, 260
 Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
 # Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'
 So said he, and the barge with oar and sail 265
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
 That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
 Revolving many memories, till the hull 270
 Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
 And on the mere the wailing died away.

Here ended Hall, and our last light, that long
 Had wink'd and threaten'd darkness, flared and fell:
 At which the Parson, sent to sleep with sound, 275
 And waked with silence, grunted 'Good!' but we
 Sat rapt: it was the tone with which he read --
 Perhaps some modern touches here and there
 Redeem'd it from the charge of nothingness—

Or else we loved the man, and prized his work . 280
 I know not : but we sitting, as I said,
 The cock crew loud : as at that time of year
 The lusty bird takes every hour for dawn :
 Then Francis, muttering, like a man ill-used,
 ‘There now—that’s nothing!’ drew a little back, 285
 And drove his heel into the smoulder’d log,
 That sent a blast of sparkles up the flue :
 And so to bed ; where yet in sleep I seem’d
 To sail with Arthur under looming shores,
 Point after point ; till on to dawn, when dreams 290
 Begin to feel the truth and stir of day.
 To me, methought, who waited with a crowd,
 There came a bark that, blowing forward, bore
 King Arthur, like a modern gentleman
 Of stateliest port ; and all the people cried, 295
 ‘Arthur is come again : he cannot die.’
 Then those that stood upon the hills behind
 Repeated—‘Come again, and thrice as fair :’
 And, further inland, voices echo’d—‘Come
 With all good things, and war shall be no more.’ 300
 At this a hundred bells began to peal,
 That with the sound I woke, and heard indeed
 The clear church-bells ring in the Christmas-morn.

ULYSSES.

It little profits that an idle king,
 By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
 Match’d with an aged wife, I mete and dole
 Unequal laws unto a savage race,
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me. 5

I cannot rest from travel : I will drink
 Life to the lees : all times I have enjoy'd
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
 That loved me, and alone ; on shore, and when
 Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades 10
 Vext the dim sea : I am become a name :
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known : cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,
 Myself not least, but honour'd of them all ; 15
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met ;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades 20
 For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use !
 As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me 25
 Little remains : but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things ; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
 And this gray spirit yearning in desire 30
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
 To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil 35
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
 A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail 40
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port ; the vessel pulls her sail :
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners, 45
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old ;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil : 50
Death closes all : but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks :
The long day wanes : the slow moon climbs : the deep 55
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows : for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths 60
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down :
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho' 65
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven ; that which we are, we are ;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. 70

ST. AGNES' EVE.

Deep on the convent-roof the snows
 Are sparkling to the moon :
 My breath to heaven like vapour goes :
 May my soul follow soon !
 The shadows of the convent-towers 5
 Slant down the snowy sward,
 Still creeping with the creeping hours
 That lead me to my Lord :
 Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
 As are the frosty skies. 10
 Or this first snowdrop of the year
 That in my bosom lies.

 As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
 To yonder shining ground ;
 As this pale taper's earthly spark, 15
 To yonder argent round ;
 So shows my soul before the Lamb,
 My spirit before Thee ;
 So in mine earthly house I am,
 To that I hope to be. 20
 Break up the heavens, O Lord ! and far,
 Thro' all yon starlight keen,
 Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
 In raiment white and clean.

 He lifts me to the golden doors : 25
 The flashes come and go ;
 All heaven bursts her starry floors,
 And strows her lights below,
 And deepens on and up ! the gates
 Roll back, and far within 30

For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits
 To make me pure of sin,
 The sabbaths of Eternity,
 One sabbath deep and wide—
 A light upon the shining sea — 35
 The Bridegroom with his bride !

SIR GALAHAD.

My good blade carves the casques of men,
 My tough lance thrusteth sure,
 My strength is as the strength of ten,
 Because my heart is pure.
 The shattering trumpet shrilleth high, 5
 The hard brands shiver on the steel,
 The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
 The horse and rider reel :
 They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
 And when the tide of combat stands, 10
 Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
 That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

 How sweet are looks that ladies bend
 On whom their favours fall !
 For them I battle till the end, 15
 To save from shame and thrall :
 But all my heart is drawn above,
 My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine :
 I never felt the kiss of love,
 Nor maiden's hand in mine. 20
 More bounteous aspects on me beam,
 Me mightier transports move and thrill :
 So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
 A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes, 25
 A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
 I hear a noise of hymns :
Then by some secret shrine I ride ;
 I hear a voice but none are there ; 30
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
 The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
 The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings, 35
 And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
 I find a magic bark ;
I leap on board : no helmsman steers :
 I float till all is dark. 40
A gentle sound, an awful light !
 Three angels bear the holy Grail :
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
 On sleeping wings they sail.
Ah, blessed vision ! blood of God ! 45
 My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
 And star-like mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
 Thro' dreaming towns I go, 50
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
 The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
 And, ringing, springs from brand and mail ;
But o'er the dark a glory spreads, 55
 And gilds the driving hail.

I leave the plain, I climb the height ;
No branchy thicket shelter yields ;
But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields. 60

A maiden knight—to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear ;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease, 65
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odours haunt my dreams :
And, stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armour that I wear, 70
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony 75
Swells up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear :
'O just and faithful knight of God !
Ride on ! the prize is near.' 80
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange :
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
Until I find the holy Grail.

·AS THRO’ THE LAND AT EVE WE WENT.

As thro’ the land at eve we went,
 And pluck’d the ripen’d ears,
 We fell out, my wife and I,
 O we fell out I know not why,
 And kiss’d again with tears. 5
 And blessings on the falling out
 That all the more endears,
 When we fall out with those we love
 And kiss again with tears !
 For when we came where lies the child 10
 We lost in other years,
 There above the little grave,
 O there above the little grave,
 We kiss’d again with tears.

‘SWEET AND LOW, SWEET AND LOW.’

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
 Wind of the western sea,
 Low, low, breathe and blow,
 Wind of the western sea !
 Over the rolling waters go, 5
 Come from the dying moon, and blow,
 Blow him again to me :
 While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.
 Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
 Father will come to thee soon ; 10
 Rest, rest, on mother’s breast,
 Father will come to thee soon ;
 Father will come to his babe in the nest,
 Silver sails all out of the west
 Under the silver moon : 15
 Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

‘THE SPLENDOUR FALLS ON CASTLE WALLS.’

The splendour falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story :
 The long light shakes across the lakes,
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying, 5
 Blow, bugle : answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear ! how thin and clear,
 And thinner, clearer, farther going !
 O sweet and far from cliff and scar
 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing ! 10
 Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying :
 Blow, bugle : answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
 They faint on hill or field or river :
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
 And grow for ever and for ever. 15
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

‘TEARS, IDLE TEARS, I KNOW NOT WHAT THEY
 MEAN.’

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
 Tears from the depth of some divine despair
 Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
 In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
 And thinking of the days that are no more. 5

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge :
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more. 10

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square ;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more. 15

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others ; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret :
O Death in Life, the days that are no more. 20

‘THY VOICE IS HEARD THRO’ ROLLING DRUMS.’

Thy voice is heard thro’ rolling drums,
That beat to battle where he stands ;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands :
A moment, while the trumpets blow, 5
He sees his brood about thy knee ;
The next, like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

‘HOME THEY BROUGHT HER WARRIOR DEAD.’

Home they brought her warrior dead :
She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry :
All her maidens, watching, said,
‘She must weep or she will die.’

Then they praised him, soft and low, 5

Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe ;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept, 10

Took the face-cloth from the face ;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears— 15
‘Sweet my child, I live for thee.’

‘ASK ME NO MORE: THE MOON MAY DRAW
THE SEA.’

Ask me no more : the moon may draw the sea ;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape ;
But O too fond, when have I answer'd thee ?
Ask me no more. 5

Ask me no more : what answer should I give ?
I love not hollow cheek or faded eye :
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die !
Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live ;
Ask me no more. 10

Ask me no more : thy fate and mine are seal'd :
I strove against the stream and all in vain :
Let the great river take me to the main :
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield ;
Ask me no more. 15

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable,
 Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
 High in her chamber up a tower to the east
 Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot ;
 Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray 5
 Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam ;
 Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it
 A case of silk, and braided thereupon
 All the devices blazon'd on the shield
 In their own tinct, and added, of her wit, 10
 A border fantasy of branch and flower,
 And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.
 Nor rested thus content, but day by day,
 Leaving her household and good father, climb'd
 That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door, 15
 Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,
 Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,
 Now made a pretty history to herself
 Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
 And every scratch a lance had made upon it, 20
 Conjecturing when and where : this cut is fresh ;
 That ten years back ; this dealt him at Caerlyle ;
 That at Caerleon ; this at Camelot :
 And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was there !
 And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God 25
 Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,
 And saved him : so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield
 Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his name ?
 He left it with her, when he rode to tilt 30

For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,
Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name
Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crown'd him King,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse, 35
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.
A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
Like its own mists to all the mountain side :
For here two brothers, one a king, had met
And fought together ; but their names were lost ; 40
And each had slain his brother at a blow ;
And down they fell and made the glen abhorrid :
And there they lay till all their bones were bleach'd,
And lichen'd into colour with the crags :
And he, that once was king, had on a crown 45
Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.
And Arthur came, and labouring up the pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull
Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown 50
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn :
And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmurs, ' Lo, thou likewise shalt be King.' 55

Thereafter, when a King, he had the gems
Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his knights,
Saying, 'These jewels, whereupon I chanced
Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the King's—
For public use : henceforward let there be, 60
Once every year, a joust for one of these :
For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn

Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow
 In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
 The heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land 65
 Hereafter, which God hinder.' Thus he spoke :
 And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still
 Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,
 With purpose to present them to the Queen,
 When all were won ; but meaning all at once 70
 To snare her royal fancy with a boon
 Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last
 And largest, Arthur, holding then his court
 Hard on the river nigh the place which now 75
 Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
 At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
 Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere,
 'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move
 To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she said, 'ye know it.' 80
 'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the great deeds
 Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
 A sight ye love to look on.' And the Queen
 Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
 On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King. 85
 He thinking that he read her meaning there,
 'Stay with me, I am sick ; my love is more
 Than many diamonds,' yielded ; and a heart
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen
 (However much he yearn'd to make complete 90
 The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)
 Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,
 'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,
 And lets me from the saddle ;' and the King
 Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way. 95
 No sooner gone than suddenly she began :

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame!
 Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the knights
 Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd
 Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones, who take 100
 Their pastime now the trustful King is gone!"'
 Then Lancelot vext at having lied in vain :
 'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
 My Queen, that summer, when ye loved me first.
 Then of the crowd ye took no more account 105
 Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
 When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,
 And every voice is nothing. As to knights,
 Them surely can I silence with all ease.
 But now my loyal worship is allow'd 110
 Of all men : many a bard, without offence,
 Has link'd our names together in his lay,
 Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,
 The pearl of beauty : and our knights at feast
 Have pledged us in this union, while the King 115
 Would listen smiling. How then? is there more?
 Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,
 Now weary of my service and devoir,
 Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?'

She broke into a little scornful laugh : 120
 'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King.
 That passionate perfection, my good lord—
 But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
 He never spake word of reproach to me,
 He never had a glimpse of mine untruth, 125
 He cares not for me : only here to-day
 There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his eyes :
 Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him—else
 Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,

And swearing men to vows impossible, 130
To make them like himself : but, friend, to me
He is all fault who hath no fault at all :
For who loves me must have a touch of earth ;
The low sun makes the colour : I am yours,
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond. 135
And therefore hear my words : go to the jousts :
The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream
When sweetest ; and the vermin voices here
May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they sting.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights : 140
' And with what face, after my pretext made,
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
Before a King who honours his own word,
As if it were his God's ?'

'Yea,' said the Queen, 145
' A moral child without the craft to rule,
Else had he not lost me ! but listen to me,
If I must find you wit : we hear it said
That men go down before your spear at a touch,
But knowing you are Lancelot ; your great name, 150
This conquers : hide it therefore ; go unknown :
Win ! by this kiss you will : and our true King
Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,
As all for glory ; for to speak him true,
Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he seem, 155
No keener hunter after glory breathes.
He loves it in his knights more than himself :
They prove to him his work : win and return.'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
Wroth at himself. Not willing to be known, 160
He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,

Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,
 And there among the solitary downs,
 Full often lost in fancy, lost his way ;
 Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track, 165
 That all in loops and links among the dales
 Ran to the castle of Astolat, he saw
 Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.
 Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn.
 Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man, 170
 Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.
 And Lancelot marvel'd at the wordless man :
 And issuing found the lord of Astolat
 With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,
 Moving to meet him in the castle court ; 175
 And close behind them stept the lily maid
 Elaine, his daughter : mother of the house
 There was not : some light jest among them rose
 With laughter dying down as the great knight
 Approach'd them : then the Lord of Astolat : 180
 ' Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name
 Livest between the lips ? for by thy state
 And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
 After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.
 Him have I seen : the rest, his Table Round, 185
 Known as they are, to me they are unknown.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights :
 ' Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
 What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.
 But since I go to joust as one unknown 190
 At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not.
 Hereafter ye shall know me — and the shield —
 I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
 Blank, or at least with some device not mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, 'Here is Torre's: 195
 Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre.
 And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.
 His ye can have.' Then added plain Sir Torre,
 'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it.'
 Here laugh'd the father saying, 'Fie, Sir Churl, 200
 Is that an answer for a noble knight?
 Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here,
 He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
 Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour,
 And set it in this damsel's golden hair, 205
 To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

'Nay, father, nay good father, shaine me not
 Before this noble knight,' said young Lavaine,
 'For nothing. Surely I but play'd on Torre : 210
 He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go :
 A jest, no more ! for, knight, the maiden dreamt
 That some one put this diamond in her hand,
 And that it was too slippery to be held,
 And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
 The castle-well, belike ; and then I said 215
 That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it
 (But all was jest and joke among ourselves)
 Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.
 But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
 To ride to Camelot with this noble knight : 220
 Win shall I not, but do my best to win :
 Young as I am, yet would I do my best.'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd Lancelot,
 Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship
 O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself, 225
 Then were I glad of you as guide and friend :

And you shall win this diamond,—as I hear
 It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
 And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.’
 ‘A fair large diamond,’ added plain Sir Torre, 230
 ‘Such be for queens, and not for simple maids.’
 Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,
 Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
 Flush’d slightly at the slight disparagement
 Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her, 235
 Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return’d :
 ‘If what is fair be but for what is fair,
 And only queens are to be counted so,
 Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
 Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth, 240
 Not violating the bond of like to like.’

He spoke and ceased : the lily maid Elaine,
 Won by the mellow voice before she look’d,
 Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.
 The great and guilty love he bare the Queen, 245
 In battle with the love he bare his lord,
 Had marr’d his face, and mark’d it ere his time.
 Another sinning on such heights with one,
 The flower of all the west and all the world,
 Had been the sleeker for it : but in him 250
 His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
 And drove him into wastes and solitudes
 For agony, who was yet a living soul.
 Marr’d as he was, he seem’d the goodliest man
 That ever among ladies ate in hall, 255
 The noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
 However marr’d, of more than twice her years,
 Seam’d with an ancient swordcut on the cheek,
 And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
 And loved him, with that love which was her doom. 260

Then the great knight, the darling of the court,
 Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
 Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain
 Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
 But kindly man moving among his kind : 265
 Whom they with meats and vintage of their best
 And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
 And much they ask'd of court and Table Round,
 And ever well and readily answer'd he :
 But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guinevere, 270
 Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
 Heard from the Baron that, ten years before,
 The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.
 'He learn'd and warn'd me of their fierce design
 Against my house, and him they caught and maim'd; 275
 But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
 From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods
 By the great river in a boatman's hut.
 Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke
 The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.' 280

'O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lavaine said, rapt
 By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth
 Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have fought.
 O tell us—for we live apart—you know
 Of Arthur's glorious wars.' And Lancelot spoke 285
 And answer'd him at full, as having been
 With Arthur in the fight which all day long
 Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem :
 And in the four loud battles by the shore
 Of Duglas ; that on Bassa : then the war 290
 That thunder'd in and out the gloomy skirts
 Of Celidon the forest : and again
 By castle Gurnion, where the glorious King

Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
 Carved of one emerald center'd in a sun 295
 Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he breathed ;
 And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,
 When the strong neighings of the wild white Horse
 Set every gilded parapet shuddering ;
 And up in Agned-Cathregomion too, 300
 And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit,
 Where many a heathen fell ; and on the mount
 Of Badon I myself beheld the King
 Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
 And all his legions crying Christ and him, 305
 And break them ; and I saw him, after, stand
 High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume
 Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
 And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
 "They are broken, they are broken !" for the King, 310
 However mild he seems at home, nor cares
 For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts—
 For if his own knight cast him down, he laughs
 Saying, his knights are better men than he—
 Yet in this heathen war the fire of God 315
 Fills him : I never saw his like : there lives
 No greater leader.'

While he utter'd this,
 Low to her own heart said the lily maid,
 'Save your great self, fair lord ;' and when he fell 320
 From talk of war to traits of pleasantry—
 Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind—
 She still took note that when the living smile
 Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
 Of melancholy severe, from which again, 325
 Whenever in her hovering to and fro

The lily maid had striven to make him cheer,
There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature : and she thought
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her. 330
And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and colour of a mind and life, 335
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest ; so the face before her lived,
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
Of noble things, and held her from her sleep.
Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the thought 340
She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.
First as in fear, step after step, she stole
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating :
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
'This shield, my friend, where is it ?' and Lavaine 345
Past inward, as she came from out the tower.
There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd, and smooth'd
The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she drew
Nearer and stood. He look'd, and more amazed 350
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light.
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood 355
Rapt on his face as if it were a God's.
Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,
That he should wear her favour at the tilt.
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
'Fair lord, whose name I know not--noble it is, 360

I well believe, the noblest — will you wear
My favour at this tourney ?’ ‘ Nay,’ said he,
‘ Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
Favour of any lady in the lists.
Such is my wont, as those, who know me, know.’ 365
‘ Yea, so,’ she answer’d ; ‘ then in wearing mine
Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,
That those who know should know you.’ And he turn’d
Her counsel up and down within his mind,
And found it true, and answer’d, ‘ True, my child. 370
Well, I will wear it : fetch it out to me :
What is it ?’ and she told him ‘ A red sleeve
Broider’d with pearls,’ and brought it : then he bound
Her token on his helmet, with a smile
Saying, ‘ I never yet have done so much 375
For any maiden living,’ and the blood
Sprang to her face and fill’d her with delight ;
But left her all the paler, when Lavaine
Returning brought the yet-unblazon’d shield,
His brother’s ; which he gave to Lancelot, 380
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine :
‘ Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield
In keeping till I come.’ ‘ A grace to me,’
She answer’d, ‘ twice to-day. I am your squire !’
Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, ‘ Lily maid, 385
For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your colour back ;
Once, twice, and thrice : now get you hence to bed :’
So kiss’d her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,
And thus they moved away : she stay’d a minute, 390
Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there—
Her bright hair blown about the serious face
Yet rosy-kindled with her brother’s kiss—
Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield

In silence, while she watch'd their arms far-off 395
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.
 Then to her tower she climb'd, and took the shield,
 There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

2 Meanwhile the new companions past away 2.
 Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs. 400
 To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived a knight
 Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
 A hermit, who had pray'd, labour'd and pray'd,
 And ever labouring had scoop'd himself
 In the white rock a chapel and a hall 405
 On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,
 And cells and chambers : all were fair and dry ;
 The green light from the meadows underneath
 Struck up and lived along the milky roofs ;
 And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees 410
 And poplars made a noise of falling showers.
 And thither wending there that night they bode.

But when the next day broke from underground,
 And shot red fire and shadows thro' the cave,
 They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away : 415
 Then Lancelot saying, ' Hear, but hold my name
 Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,'
 Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence,
 Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,
 But left him leave to stammer, ' Is it indeed ?' 420
 And after muttering ' The great Lancelot,'
 At last he got his breath and answer'd, ' One,
 One have I seen — that other, our liege lord,
 The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of kings,
 Of whom the people talk mysteriously, 425
 He will be there — then were I stricken blind
 That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd the lists
 By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
 Run thro' the peopled gallery which half round 430
 Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
 Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat
 Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
 Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
 And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold, 435
 And from the carven-work behind him crept
 Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make
 Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them
 Thro' knots and loops and folds innumerable
 Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they found 440
 The new design wherein they lost themselves,
 Yet with all ease, so tender was the work :
 And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
 Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine and said, 445
 ' Me you call great : mine is the firmer seat,
 The truer lance : but there is many a youth
 Now crescent, who will come to all I am
 And overcome it : and in me there dwells
 No greatness, save it be some far-off touch 450
 Of greatness to know well I am not great :
 There is the man.' And Lavaine gaped upon him
 As on a thing miraculous, and anon
 The trumpets blew ; and then did either side,
 They that assail'd, and they that held the lists, 455
 Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
 Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
 Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive,
 If any man that day were left afield,
 The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms. 460

And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker : then he hurl'd into it
Against the stronger : little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory ! King, duke, earl,
Count, baron—whom he smote, he overthrew. 465

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists,
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot ; and one said to the other, ' Lo ! 470
What is he ! I do not mean the force alone—
The grace and versatility of the man !
Is it not Lancelot ? ' ' When has Lancelot worn
Favour of any lady in the lists ?
Not such his wont, as we, that know him, know.' 475
' How then ? who then ? ' a fury seized them all,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears, and prick'd their steeds, and
thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind they made 480
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North-sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark, 485
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear
Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head
Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt, and remain'd. 490

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully ;
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth,

And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.
 He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
 But thought to do while he might yet endure, 495
 And being lustily holpen by the rest,
 His party,—tho' it seem'd half-miracle
 To those he fought with,—drave his kith and kin,
 And all the Table Round that held the lists,
 Back to the barrier ; then the trumpets blew 500
 Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the sleeve
 Of scarlet, and the pearls ; and all the knights,
 His party, cried ' Advance and take thy prize
 The diamond ;' but he answer'd, ' Diamond me
 No diamonds ! for God's love, a little air ! 505
 Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death !
 Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not.'

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from the field
 With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
 There from his charger down he slid, and sat, 510
 Gasping to Sir Lavaine, ' Draw the lance-head :'
 ' Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said Lavaine,
 ' I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'
 But he, ' I die already with it : draw—
 Draw,'—and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave 515
 A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,
 And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank
 For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.
 Then came the hermit out and bare him in,
 There stanch'd his wound ; and there, in daily doubt 520
 Whether to live or die, for many a week
 Hid from the wide world's rumour by the grove
 Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,
 And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

3

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists, 525

His party, knights of utmost North and West,
 Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles,
 Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,
 ‘Lo, Sire, our knight, thro’ whom we won the day,
 Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize 530
 Untaken, crying that his prize is death.’
 ‘Heaven hinder,’ said the King, ‘that such an one,
 So great a knight as we have seen to-day—
 He seem’d to me another Lancelot—
 Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot— 535
 He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore, rise,
 O Gawain, and ride forth and find the knight.
 Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.
 I charge you that you get at once to horse.
 And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you 540
 Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given :
 His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him
 No customary honour : since the knight
 Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
 Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take 545
 This diamond, and deliver it, and return,
 And bring us where he is, and how he fares,
 And cease not from your quest until ye find.’

So saying, from the carven flower above,
 To which it made a restless heart, he took, 550
 And gave, the diamond : then from where he sat
 At Arthur’s right, with smiling face arose,
 With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince
 In the mid night and flourish of his May,
 Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong, 555
 And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint
 And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal
 Sir Modred’s brother, and the child of Lot,

Nor often loyal to his word, and now
 Wroth that the King's command to sally forth 560
 In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
 The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went :
 While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
 Past, thinking ' Is it Lancelot who hath come 565
 Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain
 Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,
 And ridd'n away to die ? ' So fear'd the King,
 And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.
 Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd, 570
 ' Love, are you yet so sick ? ' ' Nay, lord,' she said,
 ' And where is Lancelot ? ' Then the Queen amazed,
 ' Was he not with you ? won he not your prize ?'
 ' Nay, but one like him.' ' Why that like was he.'
 And when the King demanded how she knew, 575
 Said, ' Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us,
 Than Lancelot told me of a common talk
 That men went down before his spear at a touch,
 But knowing he was Lancelot : his great name
 Conquer'd ; and therefore would he hide his name 580
 From all men, ev'n the King, and to this end
 Had made the pretext of a hindering wound,
 That he might joust unknown of all, and learn
 If his old prowess were in aught decay'd ;
 And added, " Our true Arthur, when he learns, 585
 Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
 Of purer glory." "

Then replied the King :
 ' Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
 In lieu of idly dallying with the truth, 590
 To have trusted me as he hath trusted thee.

Surely his King and most familiar friend
 Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed,
 Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
 So fine a fear in our large Lancelot 595
 Must needs have moved my laughter : now remains
 But little cause for laughter : his own kin—
 Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, this :—
 His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him ;
 So that he went sore wounded from the field : 600
 Yet good news too : for goodly hopes are mine
 That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
 He wore, against his wont, upon his helm
 A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great pearls,
 Some gentle maiden's gift.' 605

'Yea, lord,' she said,
 'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that, she choked,
 And sharply turned about to hide her face,
 Past to her chamber, and there flung herself
 Down on the great King's couch, and writhed upon it, 610
 And clench'd her fingers till they bit the palm,
 And shriek'd out 'Traitor,' to the unhearing wall,
 Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again,
 And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

Gawain the while thro' all the region round 615
 Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,
 Touch'd at all points, except the poplar grove,
 And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat :
 Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the maid
 Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from Camelot,
 lord ? 620
 What of the knight with the red sleeve ?' 'He won.'
 'I knew it,' she said. 'But parted from the jousts

Hurt in the side,' whereat she caught her breath ;
 Thro' her own side she felt the sharp lance go :
 Thereon she smote her hand : wellnigh she swoon'd : 625
 And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came
 The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the Prince
 Reported who he was, and on what quest
 Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find
 The victor, but had ridd'n a random round 630
 To seek him, and had wearied of the search.
 To whom the Lord of Astolat, ' Bide with us,
 And ride no more at random, noble Prince !
 Here was the knight, and here he left a shield :
 This will he send or come for : furthermore 635
 Our son is with him ; we shall hear anon.
 Needs must we hear.' To this the courteous Prince
 Accorded with his wonted courtesy.
 Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,
 And stay'd : and cast his eyes on fair Elaine : 640
 Where could be found face daintier ? then her shape
 From forehead down to foot, perfect — again
 From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd :
 ' Well—if I bide, lo ! this wild flower for me !'
 And oft they met among the garden yews, 645
 And there he set himself to play upon her
 With sallying wit, free flashes from a height
 Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
 Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence
 And amorous adulation, till the maid 650
 Rebell'd against it, saying to him, ' Prince.
 O loyal nephew of our noble King,
 Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
 Whence you might learn his name ? Why slight your
 King,
 And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove 655

No surer than our falcon yesterday,
 Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went
 To all the winds?' 'Nay, by mine head,' said he,
 'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
 O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes ; 660
 But an ye will it let me see the shield.'
 And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw
 Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,
 Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mock'd :
 'Right was the King! our Lancelot! that true man!' 665
 'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily, 'I,
 Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight of all.'
 'And if *I* dream'd,' said Gawain, 'that you love
 This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, ye know it!
 Speak therefore : shall I waste myself in vain?' 670
 Full simple was her answer, 'What know I?
 My brethren have been all my fellowship ;
 And I, when often they have talk'd of love,
 Wish'd it had been my mother, for they talk'd
 Meseem'd, of what they knew not : so myself— 675
 I know not if I know what true love is,
 But if I know, then, if I love not him,
 I know there is none other I can love.'
 'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love him well,
 But would not, knew ye what all others know, 680
 And whom he loves.' 'So be it,' cried Elaine,
 And lifted her fair face and moved away :
 But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a little !
 One golden minute's grace ! he wore your sleeve :
 Would he break faith with one I may not name ! 685
 Must our true man change like a leaf at last !
 Nay—like enow : why then, far be it from me
 To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves !
 And, damsel, for I deem you know full well

Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave 690
 My quest with you ; the diamond also ; here !
 For if you love, it will be sweet to give it ;
 And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
 From your own hand ; and whether he love or not,
 A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well 695
 A thousand times !—a thousand times farewell !
 Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
 May meet at court hereafter : there, I think,
 So ye will learn the courtesies of the court,
 We two shall know each other.' 700

Then he gave,
 And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he gave,
 The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
 Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went
 A true-love ballad, lightly rode away. 705

Thence to the court he past ; there told the King
 What the King knew, ' Sir Lancelot is the knight.'
 And added, ' Sire, my liege, so much I learnt :
 But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all round
 The region : but I lighted on the maid 710
 Whose sleeve he wore ; she loves him ; and to her,
 Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,
 I gave the diamond : she will render it :
 For by my head she knows his hiding-place.'

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and replied, 715
 ' Too courteous truly ! ye shall go no more
 On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
 Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,
 For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word, 720

Linger'd that other, staring after him ;
Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were loosed :
'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,' 725
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'
Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all
Had marvel what the maid might be, but most
Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news. 730
She, that had heard the noise of it before,
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,
Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tranquillity.
So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flared : 735
Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or thrice
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen, who sat
With lips severely placid, felt the knot 740
Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen
Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor
Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat, 745
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said,
'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault 750
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'
'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore, let me hence,'

'What matter, so I help him back to life?
 Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
 Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
 To Camelot, and before the city gates 790
 Came on her brother with a happy face
 Making a roan horse caper and curvet
 For pleasure all about a field of flowers:
 Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she cried, 'Lavaine,
 How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He amazed, 795
 'Torre and Elaine! why here! Sir Lancelot!
 How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?
 But when the maid had told him all her tale,
 Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods
 Left them, and under the strange-statued gate, 800
 Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,
 Past up the still rich city to his kin,
 His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;
 And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
 Led to the caves: there first she saw the casque 805
 Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,
 Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
 Stream'd from it still: and in her heart she laugh'd,
 Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
 But meant once more perchance to tourney in it. 810
 And when they gain'd the cell wherein he slept,
 His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
 Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
 Of dragging down his enemy made them move.
 Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn, 815
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.
 The sound not wonted in a place so still
 Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
 Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying, 820

' Your prize the diamond sent you by the King : '
 His eyes glisten'd : she fancied ' Is it for me ? '
 And when the maid had told him all the tale
 Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest
 Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt 825
 Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
 And laid the diamond in his open hand.
 Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
 That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.
 At once she slipt like water to the floor. 830
 ' Alas,' he said, ' your ride hath wearied you.
 Rest must you have.' ' No rest for me,' she said ;
 ' Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.'
 What might she mean by that ? his large black eyes
 Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon her, 835
 Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
 In the heart's colours on her simple face ;
 And Lancelot look'd and was perplex in mind.
 And being weak in body said no more ;
 But did not love the colour ; woman's love, 840
 Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
 Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
 And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
 Far up the dim rich city to her kin ; 845
 There bode the night : but woke with dawn, and past
 Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
 Thence to the cave : so day by day she past
 In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
 Gliding, and every day she tended him, 850
 And likewise many a night : and Lancelot
 Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little hurt
 Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times

Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
 Uncourteous, even he : but the meek maid 855
 Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
 Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
 Milder than any mother to a sick child,
 And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
 Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love 860
 Upbore her ; till the hermit, skill'd in all
 The simples and the science of that time,
 Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
 And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
 Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine, 865
 Would listen for her coming and regret
 Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
 And loved her with all love except the love
 Of man and woman when they love their best,
 Closest and sweetest, and had died the death 870
 In any knightly fashion for her sake.
 And peradventure had he seen her first
 She might have made this and that other world
 Another world for the sick man ; but now
 The shackles of an old love straiten'd him, 875
 His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
 And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
 Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
 These, as but born of sickness, could not live : 880
 For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
 Full often the bright image of one face,
 Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
 Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.
 Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace 885
 Beaun'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,

Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
 What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant
 She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,
 And drove her ere her time across the fields 890
 Far into the rich city, where alone
 She murmur'd, 'Vain, in vain : it cannot be.
 He will not love me : how then ? must I die ?'
 Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
 That has but one plain passage of few notes, 895
 Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
 For all an April morning, till the ear
 Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
 Went half the night repeating, 'Must I die ?'
 And now to right she turn'd, and now to left, 900
 And found no ease in turning or in rest :
 And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd, 'death or him,'
 Again and like a burthen, 'him or death.'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,
 To Astolat returning rode the three. 905
 There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
 In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,
 She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought
 'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
 If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.' 910
 And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
 That she should ask some goodly gift of him
 For her own self or hers ; 'and do not shun
 To speak the wish most near to your true heart :
 Such service have ye done me, that I make 915
 My will of yours, and Prince and Lord am I
 In mine own land, and what I will I can.'
 Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
 But like a ghost without the power to speak.

And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish, 920
And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it ; and one morn it chanced
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your wish,
Seeing I go to-day : ' then out she brake : 925
'Going ? and we shall never see you more.
And I must die for want of one bold word.'
'Speak : that I live to hear,' he said, 'is yours.'
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke :
'I have gone mad. I love you : let me die.' 930
'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this ?'
And innocently extending her white arms,
'Your love,' she said, 'your love - to be your wife.'
And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine : 935
But now there never will be wife of mine.'
'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,
But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.'
And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay, the world, the world, 940
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blare its own interpretation--nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness.' And she said, 945
'Not to be with you, not to see your face--
Alas for me then, my good days are done.'
'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay !
This is not love : but love's first flash in youth,
Most common : yea, I know it of mine own self : 950
And you yourself will smile at your own self
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age :

And then will I, for true you are and sweet
 Beyond mine old belief in womanhood, 955
 More specially should your good knight be poor,
 Endow you with broad land and territory
 Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
 So that would make you happy : furthermore,
 Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my blood, 960
 In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
 This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
 And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke
 She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale 965
 Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied :
 'Of all this will I nothing ;' and so fell,
 And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew
 Their talk had pierced, her father : 'Ay, a flash, 970
 I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
 Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.
 I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
 To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said, 975
 'That were against me : what I can I will ;'
 And there that day remain'd, and toward even
 Sent for his shield : full meekly rose the maid,
 Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield ;
 Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones, 980
 Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd
 Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.
 And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound ;
 And she by tact of love was well aware
 That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him. 985

And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,
 Nor bad farewell, but sadly rode away.
 This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat :
 His very shield was gone ; only the case, 990
 Her own poor work, her empty labour, left.
 But still she heard him, still his picture form'd
 And grew between her and the pictured wall.
 Then came her father, saying in low tones,
 ‘Have comfort,’ whom she greeted quietly. 995
 Then came her brethren saying, ‘Peace to thee,
 Sweet sister,’ whom she answer’d with all calm.
 But when they left her to herself again,
 Death, like a friend’s voice from a distant field
 Approaching thro’ the darkness, call’d ; the owls 1000
 Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt
 Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
 Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,
 And call’d her song ‘The Song of Love and Death,’ 1005
 And sang it : sweetly could she make and sing.

‘Sweet is true love tho’ given in vain, in vain ;
 And sweet is death who puts an end to pain :
 I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

‘Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be: 1010
 Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
 O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

‘Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
 Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,
 I know not which is sweeter, no, not I. 1015

‘I fain would follow love, if that could be;
 I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
 Call and I follow, I follow! let me die.’

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,
 All in a fiery dawning wild with wind 1020
 That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and thought
 With shuddering, ‘Hark the Phantom of the house
 That ever shrieks before a death,’ and call’d
 The father, and all three in hurry and fear
 Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light of dawn 1025
 Flared on her face, she shrilling, ‘Let me die!’

As when we dwell upon a word we know,
 Repeating, till the word we know so well
 Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
 So dwelt the father on her face, and thought 1030
 ‘Is this Elaine!’ till back the maiden fell,
 Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,
 Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.
 At last she said, ‘Sweet brothers, yester-night
 I seem’d a curious little maid again, 1035
 As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
 And when ye used to take me with the flood
 Up the great river in the boatman’s boat.
 Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
 That has the poplar on it: there ye fixt 1040
 Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
 And yet I cried because ye would not pass
 Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
 Until we found the palace of the King.
 And yet ye would not; but this night I dream’d 1045
 That I was all alone upon the flood
 And then I said, “Now shall I have my will:”
 And there I woke, but still the wish remain’d.

So let me hence that I may pass at last
 Beyond the poplar and far up the flood, 1050
 Until I find the palace of the King.
 There will I enter in among them all,
 And no man there will dare to mock at me ;
 But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
 And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me ; 1055
 Gawain, who had a thousand farewells to me,
 Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bad me one :
 And there the King will know me and my love,
 And there the Queen herself will pity me,
 And all the gentle court will welcome me, 1060
 And after my long voyage I shall rest !

‘Peace,’ said her father, ‘O my child, ye seem
 Light-headed, for what force is yours to go
 So far, being sick ? and wherefore would ye look
 On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all ?’ 1065

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,
 And bluster into stormy sobs and say,
 ‘I never loved him : an I meet with him,
 I care not howsoever great he be,
 Then will I strike at him and strike him down, 1070
 Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,
 For this discomfort he hath done the house.’

To whom the gentle sister made reply,
 ‘Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,
 Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot’s fault 1075
 Not to love me, than it is mine to love
 Him of all men who seems to me the highest.’

‘Highest?’ the father answer’d, echoing ‘highest?’
 (He meant to break the passion in her) ‘nay,

Daughter, I know not what you call the highest : 1080
 But this I know, for all the people know it,
 He loves the Queen, and in an open shame :
 And she returns his love in open shame ;
 If this be high, what is it to be low ?

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat : 1085
 ' Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
 For anger : these are slanders : never yet
 — Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
 — He makes no friend who never made a foe.
 But now it is my glory to have loved 1090
 One peerless, without stain : so let me pass,
 My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
 Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
 And greatest, tho' my love had no return :
 Yet, seeing you desire your child to live, 1095
 Thanks, but you work against your own desire :
 For if I could believe the things you say
 I should but die the sooner ; wherefore cease,
 Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
 Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and die.' 1100

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,
 She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,
 Besought Lavaine to write as she devised
 A letter, word for word ; and when he ask'd
 ' Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord ? 1105
 Then will I bear it gladly : ' she replied,
 ' For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world,
 But I myself must bear it.' Then he wrote
 The letter she devised ; which being writ
 And folded, ' O sweet father, tender and true, 1110
 Deny me not,' she said - ' ye never yet
 Denied my fancies--this, however strange,

My latest : lay the letter in my hand
 A little ere I die, and close the hand
 Upon it ; I shall guard it even in death. 1115
 And when the heat is gone from out my heart,
 Then take the little bed on which I died
 For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's
 For richness, and me also like the Queen
 In all I have of rich, and lay me on it. 1120
 And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
 To take me to the river, and a barge
 Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
 I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
 There surely I shall speak for mine own self, 1125
 And none of you can speak for me so well.
 And therefore let our dumb old man alone
 Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
 Will guide me to that palace, to the doors.'

She ceased : her father promised : whereupon 1130
 She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
 Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
 But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
 Her father laid the letter in her hand,
 And closed the hand upon it, and she died. 1135
 So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground.
 Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
 Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
 Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone 1140
 Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
 Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
 There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
 Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
 Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face. 1145

So those two brethren from the chariot took
 And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
 Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
 The silken case with braided blazonings,
 And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her 1150
 'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again
 'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.
 Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
 Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood —
 In her right hand the lily, in her left 1155
 The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
 And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
 Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
 All but her face, and that clear-featured face
 Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead, 1160
 But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved
 Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
 The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
 Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow, 1165
 With deaths of others, and almost his own,
 The nine-years-fought-for diamonds: for he saw
 One of her house, and sent him to the Queen
 Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
 With such and so unmoved a majesty 1170
 She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,
 Low-drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her feet
 For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
 The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
 In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls, 1175
 And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,
 Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,

They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd, ' Queen,
 Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy, 1180
 Take, what I had not won except for you,
 These jewels, and make me happy, making them
 An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,
 Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's
 Is tawnier than her cygnet's : these are words : 1185
 Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
 In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it
 Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words
 Perchance, we both can pardon : but, my Queen,
 I hear of rumours flying thro' your court. 1190
 Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,
 Should have in it an absoluter trust
 To make up that defect : let rumours be :
 When did not rumours fly ? these, as I trust
 That you trust me in your own nobleness, 1195
 I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away, the Queen
 Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
 Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,
 Till all the place whereon she stood was green : 1200
 Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand
 Received at once and laid aside the gems
 There on a table near her, and replied :

' It may be, I am quicker of belief
 Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake. 1205
 Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
 This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,
 It can be broken easier. I for you
 This many a year have done despite and wrong
 To one whom ever in my heart of hearts 1210
 I did acknowledge nobler. What are these ?

Diamonds for me ! they had been thrice their worth
Being your gift, had you not lost your own.

To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me ! 1215

For her ! for your new fancy. Only this
Grant me, I pray you : have your joys apart.
I doubt not that however changed, you keep
So much of what is graceful : and myself
Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy

In which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule :
So cannot speak my mind. An end to this !
A strange one ! yet I take it with Amen.
So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls :
Deck her with these ; tell her, she shines me down : 1225

An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's
Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
O as much fairer—as a faith once fair
Was richer than these diamonds—hers not mine—
Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself, 1230
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will—
She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,
And, thro' the casement standing wide for heat,
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the
stream. 1235

Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disdain
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
Close underneath his eyes, and right across 1240
Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
 To weep and wail in secret ; and the barge, 1215
 On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
 There two stood arm'd, and kept the door ; to whom,
 All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
 Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that ask'd
 'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard face, 1250
 As hard and still as is the face that men
 Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
 On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said,
 'He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
 Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair ! 1255
 Yea, but how pale ! what are they ? flesh and blood !
 Or come to take the King to Fairyland ?
 For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
 But that he passes into Fairyland.'

While thus they babbled of the King, the King 1260
 Came girt with knights : then turn'd the tongueless man
 From the half-face to the full eye, and rose
 And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.
 So Arthur had the meek Sir Percivale
 And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid ; 1265
 And reverently they bore her into hall.
 Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
 And Lancelot later came and mused at her,
 And last the Queen herself, and pitied her :
 But Arthur spied the letter in her hand, 1270
 Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it ; this was all :

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake :
 I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
 Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
 Hither, to take my last farewell of you. 1275
 I loved you, and my love had no return,

And therefore my true love has been my death.
 And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,
 And to all other ladies, I make moan :
 Pray for my soul, and yield me burial. 1286
 Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
 As thou art a knight peerless.'

Thus he read ;

And ever in the reading, lords and dames
 Wept, looking often from his face who read 1285
 To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
 So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips,
 Who had devised the letter, moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all :
 ' My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear, 1290
 Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
 Right heavy am I ; for good she was and true,
 But loved me with a love beyond all love
 In women, whomsoever I have known.
 Yet to be loved makes not to love again ; 1295
 Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
 I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
 No cause, not willingly, for such a love :
 To this I call my friends in testimony,
 Her brethren, and her father, who himself 1300
 Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
 To break her passion, some discourtesy
 Against my nature : what I could, I did.
 I left her and I bid her no farewell ;
 Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died, 1305
 I might have put my wits to some rough use,
 And help'd her from herself.'

Then said the Queen

(Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm)

‘Ye might at least have done her so much grace, 1310
 Fair lord, as would have help’d her from her death.’
 He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
 He adding,

‘Queen, she would not be content
 Save that I wedded her, which could not be. 1315
 Then might she follow me thro’ the world, she ask’d;
 It could not be. I told her that her love
 Was but the flash of youth, would darken down
 To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
 Toward one more worthy of her—then would I, 1320
 More specially were he, she wedded, poor,
 Estate them with large land and territory
 In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,
 To keep them in all joyance: more than this
 I could not; this she would not, and she died.’ 1325

He pausing, Arthur answer’d, ‘O my knight,
 It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
 And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
 To see that she be buried worshipfully.’

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm 1330
 Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
 The marshall’d Order of their Table Round,
 And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
 The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
 Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies, 1335
 And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
 And when the knights had laid her comely head
 Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
 Then Arthur spake among them, ‘Let her tomb
 Be costly, and her image thereupon, 1340
 And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
 Be carven, and her lily in her hand.

And let the story of her dolorous voyage
 For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
 In letters gold and azure !— which was wrought 1345
 Thereafter ; but when now the lords and dames
 And people, from the high door streaming, brake
 Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
 Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,
 Drew near, and sigh'd in passing, ' Lancelot, 1350
 Forgive me : mine was jealousy in love.'
 He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
 ' That is love's curse ; pass on, my Queen, forgiven.'
 But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
 Approach'd him, and with full affection said, 1355

' Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
 Most joy and most alliance, for I know
 What thou hast been in battle by my side,
 And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt
 Strike down the lusty and long practised knight, 1360
 And let the younger and unskill'd go by
 To win his honour and to make his name,
 And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
 Made to be loved ; but now I would to God,
 Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes, 13 5
 Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems,
 By God for thee alone, and from her face,
 If one may judge the living by the dead,
 Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
 Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man 1370
 Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
 Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
 My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, ' Fair she was, my King,
 Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be. 1375

To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
 To doubt her pureness were to want a heart—
 Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
 Could bind him, but free love will not be bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said the King. 1380
 'Let love be free ; free love is for the best :
 And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,
 What should be best, if not so pure a love
 Clothed in so pure a loveliness ? yet thee
 She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think, 1385
 Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,
 And at the inrunning of a little brook
 Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
 The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes 1390
 And saw the barge that brought her moving down,
 Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
 Low in himself, ' Ah simple heart and sweet,
 Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
 Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul ? 1395
 Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at last—
 Farewell, fair lily. " Jealousy in love !"
 Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride ?
 Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
 May not your crescent fear for name and fame 1400
 Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes ?
 Why did the King dwell on my name to me ?
 Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,
 Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
 Caught from his mother's arms—the wondrous one 1405
 Who passes thro' the vision of the night—
 She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
 Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn

She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair, my child,
 As a king's son," and often in her arms 1410
 She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.
 Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er it be !
 For what am I ! what profits me my name
 Of greatest knight ? I fought for it, and have it :
 Pleasure to have it, none ; to lose it, pain ; 1415
 Now grown a part of me : but what use in it ?
 To make men worse by making my sin known ?
 Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great ?
 Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
 Not after Arthur's heart ! I needs must break 1420
 These bonds that so defame me : not without
 She wills it : would I, if she will'd it ! nay,
 Who knows ? but if I would not, then may God,
 I pray him, send a sudden Angel down
 To seize me by the hair and bear me far, 1425
 And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
 Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.'

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
 Not knowing he should die a holy man.

TO VIRGIL.

*Written at the Request of the Mantuanus for the Nineteenth
 Centenary of Virgil's Death.*

I.

Roman Virgil, thou that singest
 Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
 Ilion falling, Rome arising,
 wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre ;

II.

Landscape-lover, lord of language 5
more than he that sang the Works and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase ;

III.

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd ; 10
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word ;

IV.

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen bowers ;
Poet of the poet-satyr 15
whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers ;

V.

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea ; 20

VI.

Thou that seest Universal
Nature moved by Universal Mind ;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind ;

VII.

Light among the vanish'd ages ; 25
 star that gildest yet this phantom shore ;
 Golden branch amid the shadows,
 kings and realms that pass to rise no more ;

VIII.

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
 fallen every purple Caesar's dome— 30
 Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
 sound for ever of Imperial Rome—

IX.

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
 and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
 !, from out the Northern Island 35
 sunder'd once from all the human race,

X.

I salute thee, Mantovano,
 I that loved thee since my day began,
 Wielder of the stateliest measure
 ever moulded by the lips of man. 40

EARLY SPRING.

I.

Once more the Heavenly Power
 Makes all things new,
 And domes the red-plow'd hills
 With loving blue ;
 The blackbirds have their wills, 5
 The throstles too.

II.

Opens a door in heaven ;
From skies of glass
A Jacob's ladder falls
On greening grass, 10
And o'er the mountain-walls
Young angels pass.

III.

Before them fleets the shower,
And burst the buds,
And shine the level lands, 15
And flash the floods ;
The stars are from their hands
Flung thro' the woods,

IV.

The woods with living airs
How softly fann'd, 20
Light airs from where the deep,
All down the sand,
Is breathing in his sleep,
Heard by the land.

V.

O follow, leaping blood, 25
The season's lure !
O heart, look down and up
Serene, secure,
Warm as the crocus cup,
Like snowdrops, pure ! 30

VI.

Past, Future glimpse and fade
Thro' some slight spell,
A gleam from yonder vale,
Some far blue fell,
And sympathies, how frail,
In sound and smell ! 35

VII.

Till at thy chuckled note,
Thou twinkling bird,
The fairy fancies range,
And, lightly stirr'd, 40
Ring little bells of change
From word to word.

VIII.

For now the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And thaws the cold, and fills 45
The flower with dew :
The blackbirds have their wills,
The poets too.

FREEDOM.

I.

O thou so fair in summers gone,
While yet thy fresh and virgin soul
Inform'd the pillar'd Parthenon,
The glittering Capitol ;

14.

5

So fair in southern sunshine bathed,
But scarce of such majestic mien
As here with forehead vapour-swathed
In meadows ever green ;

III.

For thou—when Athens reign'd and Rome
 Thy glorious eyes were dimm'd with pain 10
 To mark in many a freeman's home
 The slave, the scourge, the chain ;

IV.

O follower of the Vision, still
 In motion to the distant gleam,
 Howe'er blind force and brainless will
 May jar thy golden dream

V.

Of Knowledge fusing class with class,
Of civic Hate no more to be,
Of Love to leaven all the mass,
Till every Soul be free ;

VI.

Who yet, like Nature, wouldst not mar
 By changes all too fierce and fast
 This order of Her Human Star,
 This heritage of the past;

VII.

O scorner of the party cry 25
 That wanders from the public good,
 Thou—when the nations rear on high
 Their idol smear'd with blood,

VIII.

And when they roll their idol down—
 Of saner worship sanely proud; 30
 Thou loather of the lawless crown
 As of the lawless crowd;

IX.

How long thine ever-growing mind
 Hath still'd the blast and strown the wave,
 Tho' some of late would raise a wind 35
 To sing thee to thy grave,

X.

Men loud against all forms of power—
 Unfurnish'd brows, tempestuous tongues —
 Expecting all things in an hour—
 Brass mouths and iron lungs! 40

CROSSING THE BAR.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me !
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,
But such a tide as moving seems asleep, 5
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell, 10
And after that the dark !
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark ;
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face 15
When I have crost the bar.

NOTES

NOTES.

GRAY.

THOMAS GRAY was born in London, December the 26th, 1716. His father, Philip Gray, was a man of violent temper who ill-treated his wife and neglected his child,—indeed, conducted himself in such a fashion as to give grounds for the conjecture that he was not wholly in his right mind. Mrs. Gray before marriage had kept a millinery shop in London, in partnership with her sister, Mary Antrobus; and, although her husband had inherited a fortune of £10,000 from his father, she was under the necessity of continuing the shop in order to maintain herself and her child. Thomas alone, in a family of twelve children, survived infancy; in him, too, there was a strain of constitutional weakness, and, throughout life, a marked deficiency in physical vigour. Two of Mrs. Gray's brothers were university men, one of them was an assistant master at Eton, and thither Thomas Gray was sent to school about the year 1727. His uncle, we are told, "took prodigious pains with him." Pains were not thrown away; already before leaving Eton, as his Latin verses show, Gray possessed more than creditable scholarship and a thoughtfulness beyond his years. Though of a shy and retiring nature, he had the gift of making warm friends, and at school he formed a close alliance with two of his contemporaries, Horace Walpole, son of the great Prime Minister, and Richard West; these shared with him his bookish tastes and his indifference to ordinary boyish amusements. In 1734 he entered Cambridge, whither Walpole subsequently followed him. Here he led a retired and studious life, neglecting however the chief pursuit of the place, mathematics, which he heartily disliked, and in his literary studies following his own bent. He read classical and Italian literature, and could write very good verse, both Latin and English. In the latter case, he employed the fashionable heroic couplet, not for the expression of his own sentiments, but for the translation of classical originals. In college life he found no stimulus, he suffered from constitutional depression of spirits and from a lack of

definite aims and practical ambition. He left Cambridge in September, 1738, without even taking his degree, and seems to have spent the next six months aimlessly at home in London.

From this torpid condition he was fortunately roused by a proposal of Walpole's that Gray should accompany him on a continental tour,—Walpole to defray all the expenses while Gray was to consider himself perfectly independent. On March 29th, 1739, Gray left Dover. The next two years and a half he spent in travel, seeing the most interesting objects, mingling with brilliant and refined society, and finding in the persons and scenes which he encountered, sources of stimulus and of cheerfulness which were too much lacking in his previous and in his subsequent career. The first long stay was made at Paris, where the travellers remained two months, and where Walpole's connections opened to them the doors of the best Parisian houses. The summer was passed at Rheims, and in November the travellers crossed the Alps and entered Italy. With the grandeur and beauty of Swiss scenery Gray was greatly impressed, and in this he was somewhat singular. Not fifty years before Addison had beheld the same scenes with dread and dislike. The modern feeling for the rugged and romantic in nature was just beginning to develop: and here, as repeatedly in his life, we find Gray in advance of his time and in sympathy with the ideas and feelings of a later generation than his own. He writes to his friend West

"I own I have not, as yet, anywhere met with those grand and simple works of art that are to amaze one, and whose sight one is to be the better for; but those of nature have astonished me beyond expression. In our little journey up to the Grande Chartreuse, I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation that there was no restraining; not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain that would awe an atheist into belief without the help of other argument. One need not have a very fantastic imagination to see spirits there at noonday. You have Death perpetually before your eyes, only so far removed as to compose the mind without frightening it."

In Italy, another of Gray's many aptitudes showed itself, his openness to artistic impressions both in music and in the plastic arts. "Gray was one of the few poets," says Gosse, "who possessed not merely an ear for music, but considerable executive skill. Mason tells us that he enjoyed, probably at this very time, instruction on the harpsichord from the younger Searlatti, but his main gift was for vocal music. He had a small but very clear and pure voice, and was much admired for his singing in his youth, but during later years was so shy that Walpole never could but once prevail on him to give proof of it; and then it was with so much pain to himself, that it gave Walpole no manner of

pleasure.' In after years he had a harpsichord in his rooms at college, and continued to cultivate this sentimental sort of company in his long periods of solitude. Gray formed a valuable collection of MS. music whilst he was in Italy; it consisted of nine large volumes bound in vellum, and enriched by a variety of notes in Gray's hand-writing."

The winter of 1739-40 was spent in Florence at the house of Mr. Horace Mann, the English ambassador, where, again, Gray would necessarily meet many interesting and distinguished persons. Here, too, he enjoyed ample opportunities for enlarging his acquaintance with music, painting, and sculpture. In March, the travellers proceeded to Rome, whence they visited Naples, Herculaneum, etc.,—places which had for Gray, with his classical reading, a special interest. In summer they were again at Florence, where Gray began his first serious literary undertaking, a poem in Latin hexameters, *De Principiis Cogitandi*, intended to expound the principles of Locke's philosophy, as Lucretius had expounded those of Epicurus in his great didactic epic. This poem was never completed, but some 250 lines of it are to be found in Gray's collected works. In April, 1741, the two young men separated owing to a quarrel, the blame of which Walpole, writing to Gray's biographer in 1773, takes upon his own shoulders :

"I am conscious that in the beginning of the differences between Gray and me the fault was mine. I was too young, too fond of my own diversions, nay, I do not doubt, too much intoxicated by indulgence, vanity, and the insolence of my situation as Prime-minister's son, not to have been inattentive and insensible to the feelings of one I thought below me. . . . I treated him insolently; he loved me, and I did not think he did. I reproached him with the difference between us, when he acted from convictions of knowing he was my superior. I often disregarded his wishes of seeing places, which I would not quit other amusements to visit, though I offered to send him to them without me. Forgive me, if I say that his temper was not conciliating; at the same time that I will confess to you he acted a more friendly part, had I had the sense to take advantage of it—he freely told me of my faults. I declared that I did not desire to hear them, nor would correct them. You will not wonder that, with the dignity of his spirit and the obstinate carelessness of mine, the breach must have grown wider till we became incompatible."

Gray went on to Venice, spent some months in northern Italy, re-crossed the Alps by the same route as before, and again halted at the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse. Here he composed the best known of his Latin poems, the Alcaic ode. "In this little piece of twenty lines," says Gosse, "we first recognize that nicety of expression, that delicate lapidary style, that touch of subdued romantic sentiment, which distinguish the English poetry of Gray." On the first of September, 1741, he reached London.

In London he began the study of law with the idea of following that profession, but seems never to have devoted himself seriously to the subject. He was far more interested in literary pursuits, in which he had the ardent sympathy of his friend West, who was also supposed to be preparing himself for the legal profession. Gray began his first original work in English verse, a tragedy entitled *Agrippina*, but his ardour for the theme was easily chilled by West's unfavourable criticism, and only a small fragment was ever written. The old depression of spirits which had vanished amidst the animation of travel, returned.

"Mine, you are to know," he writes to West, "is a white melancholy, for the most part; which, though it seldom laughs or dances, nor ever amounts to what one calls joy or pleasure, yet is a good, easy sort of state, and *ça ne laisse que de s'amuser*. The only fault is its vapidity, which is apt now and then to give a sort of *ennui*, which makes one form certain little wishes that signify nothing. But there is another sort, black indeed, which I have now and then felt, that has somewhat in it like Tertullian's rule of faith, *credo quia impossibile est*; for it believes, nay, is sure of everything that is unlikely, so it be but frightful; and on the other hand excludes and shuts its eyes to the most possible hopes, and everything that is pleasurable. From this the Lord deliver us! for none but he and sunshiny weather can do it."

His melancholy and loneliness were presently greatly intensified by the death of West in June, 1742,—a loss deeply felt.

At the date of his friend's death, Gray was at Stoke Pogis in Buckinghamshire, where lived Mr. Jonathan Rogers and his wife,—the latter a sister of Mrs. Gray—in "a farmstead of two stories with a rustic porch before the front door." From henceforward, for many years, this farmstead was to be his home. His father had died shortly after his return from the Continent, and upon the death of Mr. Rogers, in the following autumn, Mrs. Gray and Mary Antrobus disposed of their shop, and settled with Mrs. Rogers at Stoke. It was at Stoke, in the summer of which we are speaking, that Gray first found his true sphere of work. Here in June he wrote his *Ode on the Spring*, in August his sonnet to the memory of West, and the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton*, i.e., Eton as seen from Stoke Pogis itself, and again in the same month his *Hymn to Adversity*. It is probable, although the fact is not certainly established, that later in the same year he began his *Elegy*.

Hitherto, it is probable, Gray had expected that the paternal fortune would suffice to maintain him in affluence; but Philip Gray, shortly before his death, had squandered a large part of his wealth. When Mrs. Gray and her two sisters united their housekeeping at Stoke, it became apparent to Gray that the surplus, after the comfort of the old ladies

had been provided for, would support him only with the exercise of the most rigid economy. The natural alternative of increasing this small income by entering on some active profession was wholly alien to his nature and tastes. At twenty-five years of age, he, as it were, renounced the active world; without any official connection with university or college, took up his residence in Peterhouse, Cambridge, attracted mainly by the libraries and the cheapness of living, and settled down to a life of study and self-improvement. "Henceforward, until 1759, his whole life was a regular oscillation between Stoke and Cambridge, varied only by occasional visits to London. The first part of his life was now over. At twenty-five Gray becomes a middle-aged man, and loses among the libraries of the university, his last pretensions to physical elasticity. From this time forward we find that his ailments, his melancholy, his reserve, and his habit of drowning consciousness in perpetual study, have taken firm hold upon him, and he begins to plunge into an excess of reading, treating the acquisition of knowledge as a narcotic." (Gosse.)

He had no official position, no connection with the work of the place, nor did he mingle in university society, for which indeed he entertained a profound contempt. A few intimate friends he had, chiefly persons connected with Pembroke College; and, as time went on, he attracted around him several younger men to whom he was warmly attached, and who, in return, looked up to him with a feeling of discipleship. His life, however, was that of a recluse; until the year 1759, the winter seclusion of his rooms at Peterhouse was scarcely varied except by the greater seclusion of the summer months spent with his mother and aunts at Stoke Pogis. His happiness he found in study. No English poet ever possessed more fully the tastes and aptitudes of the genuine scholar than did Gray; he delighted in study for its own sake; he carried on laborious investigations, not to publish them to the world, not from the desire of fame, but for his own satisfaction. He united an extraordinary sense for the beauty and power of literature, fine taste, and critical discernment with the scholar's instinct for accuracy and for bestowing the utmost pains in order to arrive at clearness or certainty in regard to matters which might seem of very small importance. On first settling at Cambridge, he plunged into the study of Greek, to which he mainly devoted himself for four or five years. He projected and began a critical text of the Greek geographer Strabo, and produced "a great number of geographical disquisitions, particularly with respect to that part of Asia which comprehends Persia

and India; concerning the ancient and modern names and divisions of which extensive countries his notes are very copious." He almost completed an edition of the Greek Anthology with translations into Latin elegiac verse. His notes on Plato were sufficiently valuable to be largely incorporated, more than one hundred years after they were written, in the excellent English edition of several of the Dialogues by Dr. Thompson, the Master of Trinity. In his preference for Greek above Latin literature, he was in sympathy rather with the 19th than the 18th century. And in other tastes he, to an extraordinary degree, anticipated the tendencies of a later time, or, to say the least, was in the very forefront of the new movements of his own era. He had a keen interest, for example, in observing those smaller phenomena of nature, which were little marked by most of his contemporaries. Of these phenomena he kept records which he was wont to send to his friend Wharton, such as the following from a letter of the year 1763:—

"Feb. 3. Snowdrops flowered. 12. Crocus and hepatica fl., the snow then lying and therm. at 45. 18. Chaffinch sings. Bees appear. 21. White butterfly abroad. 25. Gnats fly, and large flies. Mezerion fl. 27. Honeysuckle and gooseberry unfold their leaves," etc.

He did not stop short with this kind of observation, but, characteristically, made his knowledge accurate and systematic. "For many of the latter years of his life," a contemporary tells us, "Gray dedicated his hours to the study of Botany; in which he was eminently conspicuous. He had Linnaeus' works, interleaved, always before him, when I have accidentally called upon him." His knowledge of zoology and entomology was, for his day, large and accurate. Of his appreciation of art, mention has already been made. In this subject again, especially in the department of architecture, he anticipates the new tendencies. "It is not too much to say," writes Mr. Gosse, "that Gray was the first modern student of architecture. His treatise on Norman architecture is so sound and learned that it is much to be regretted that he has not left us more of his architectural essays." Here, as elsewhere, he was not content with second-hand knowledge, but was accustomed to make a careful personal examination of the remains of earlier architecture.

To return to the history of the poet's life: in 1744, he and Walpole were reconciled, and visits to Walpole's house from that time on served to vary the even tenor of his life. In the years which followed his retirement to Cambridge, Gray's poetical faculty was in abeyance. The silence was broken in 1747 by the graceful and humorous little

piece *On Mr. Walpole's Cat*. In the same year, Walpole prevailed upon him to publish anonymously his *Eton Ode*; this was the first appearance of an English poem by him in print. In this year, too, Gray made the acquaintance of Mason, his subsequent biographer, then a young scholar of twenty-two; Mason became one of Gray's most intimate friends and his good-nature and animation were a wholesome antidote to Gray's indifference and melancholy. The result of these quickening influences is apparent in the gradual renewal of the poet's productive activity. In August, 1748, he had written some fifty lines in heroic couplets, after the manner of Dryden, upon the subject of *The Alliance between Education and Government*. The title shows that it was to be one of those didactic poems, so characteristic of the first half of the 18th century, but it was never completed. In the same year were printed anonymously, in a miscellaneous collection of poems by various authors, the odes *On Spring*, *On Mr. Walpole's Cat*, and *On Eton*. In the summer of 1750 the *Elegy* was completed; to this the poet's thoughts may have been recalled by the death of his aunt, Mary Antrobus, in the preceding autumn. On June 12th, 1750, he writes to Walpole: "I have been here at Stoke a few days (where I shall continue a good part of the summer); and having put an end to a thing, whose beginning you have seen long ago, I immediately send it you. You will, I hope, look upon it in the light of a thing with an end to it; a merit that most of my writings have wanted and are like to want." The *Elegy* was handed about in MS. by Walpole, and was the means of procuring for the poet the friendship of Lady Cobham, who occupied the Manor House of Stoke, close to Gray's own home. The beginnings of the intercourse between them are humorously narrated in Gray's poem, *A Long Story*. Meanwhile, the proprietor of a magazine into whose hands the MS. of the *Elegy* had fallen, proposed to print it. Gray, to protect himself against the pirates, authorized its publication by Dodsley, and it appeared in Feb. 1751. It had extraordinary success from the very first, and, though the publication was anonymous, the name of the author became gradually known and famous.

In March 1753, the first collected edition of Gray's works appeared in a handsome, illustrated volume, entitled *Designs by Mr. R. Bentley, for Six Poems by Mr. T. Gray*. The peculiar title which relegates the poet to a second place, was imposed by the modesty of Gray. In this same month Gray's mother died at the age of sixty-seven. In life and in death Gray felt for his mother an affection of unwonted depth and

tenderness. He buried her beside her sister in the beautiful churchyard to Stoke Pogis, and placed upon the stone this touching inscription:—

“In the vault beneath are deposited, in hope of a joyful resurrection, the remains of Mary Antrobus. She died unmarried, Nov. 5, 1749, aged 66. In the same pious confidence, beside her friend and sister, here sleep the remains of Dorothy Gray, widow, the careful, tender mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her. She died March 11, 1753, aged 67.”

A stage in Gray's poetical development is marked by the completion, in 1754, of *The Progress of Poesy*, the first of his Pindaric odes. In the following summer he had the first attack of his hereditary malady, the gout, and during the remainder of his life it was only at intervals that he enjoyed even tolerable health. Next year, a rough practical joke of the students at Peterhouse led to Gray's removal to Pembroke College. “He adopted,” says Gosse, “habits at Pembroke which he had never indulged in at Peterhouse. He was the first, and for a long time the only, person in the university who made his rooms look pretty. He took care that his windows should always be full of mignonette or some other sweetly-scented plant, and he was famous for a pair of huge Japanese vases, in blue and white china. His servant, Stephen Hempstead, had to keep the room as bright and spick as an old lady's handbox, and not an atom of dust was allowed to rest on the little harpsichord when the poet used to sit in the twilight and play toccatas of Scarlatti or Pergolesi. Here for fifteen quiet years, the autumn of his life, Gray lived amongst his books, his china, and his pictures.”

The Bard, the second of the Pindaric odes, was some two years, at least, in the making, and was brought to a conclusion under the inspiration afforded by the music of a blind Welsh harper who gave some concerts at Cambridge in the spring of 1757. Walpole, wishing employment for a printing-press which he had set up in his villa, Strawberry Hill, prevailed upon the poet to allow his two Pindaric odes to be printed there, and to be published by Dodsley. To this thin volume the poet's name was appended, and it won him no small fame among the discerning critics. Gray was now generally recognized as the leading poet of the time; towards the close of 1757, the laureateship was offered to him, but was declined. “The office itself” Gray writes to Mason, “has always humbled the professor hitherto (even in an age when kings were somebody), if he were a poor writer by making him more conspicuous, and if he were a good one by setting him at war with the little fry of his own profession, for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet-laureate.”

In consequence of the death of Mrs. Rogers, the Stoke house was closed in 1759; at the same time Gray, while not giving up his rooms at Cambridge, ceased to reside there, and took lodgings for two consecutive years in London. He did this in order to have access to the manuscripts of the British Museum, which had just been opened. There was in Gray, as in the age to which he belonged, a growing tendency towards the Romantic. We have seen this in his admiration for the wild scenery of the Alps, in his interest in Gothic architecture; it now becomes more strikingly apparent in his literary studies, which turned more and more to the earlier stages of our own and allied literatures. In 1757 he had written with enthusiasm to one of his correspondents about the old ballad of *Child Maurice*, which had come under his notice. He now took advantage of the Museum to become acquainted with that earlier English poetry which the generation of Pope would have regarded as barbarous and beneath contempt. He projected a history of English Poetry which, like so many of Gray's works, never went beyond some fragments. It was in 1760 that Macpherson began to publish the supposed remains of early Highland literature, and Gray, like the rest of the world, grew enthusiastic about *Ossian*. In like manner, some works lately published referring to northern mythology and Welsh poetry attracted his attention; and his later poetical attempts, *The Fatal Sisters*, *The Descent of Odin*, and *The Triumphs of Odin* are, he himself says, imitations to represent "the style that reigned in ancient times among the neighbouring nations, or those who had subdued the greater part of this island." "From this time forth," says Mr. Gosse, "what little serious poetry he wrote was distinctly romantic, and his studies were all in the direction of what was savage and archaic, the poetry of the precursors of our literature in England and Scotland, the Runic chants of the Scandinavians, the war-songs of the primitive Gaels—everything, in fact, which for a century past had been looked upon as ungenteeled and incorrect in literature."

From the time that the death of his mother loosened his connection with Stoke Pogis, Gray was accustomed during the summer months to make little tours within the limits of Britain, and, as Sir James Mackintosh says: "He was the *first* discoverer of the beauties of nature in England, and has marked out the course of every picturesque journey that can be made in it." In 1765 he visited Scotland and gazed with enthusiasm upon Dunkeld, Taymouth, the falls of Tummel, Killiecrankie, Blair Athol, and the peaks of the Grampians—scenes through which for years thousands of tourists annually rush—then practically unknown to Englishmen.

"I am returned from Scotland," he wrote to Mason, "charmed with my expedition; it is of the Highlands I speak; the Lowlands are worth seeing once, but the mountains are ecstatic, and ought to be visited in pilgrimage once a year. None but those monstrous creatures of God know how to join so much beauty with so much horror. A fig for your poets, painters, gardeners, and clergymen, that have not been among them; their imagination can be made up of nothing but bowling-greens, flowering shrubs, horse-ponds, Fleet ditches, shell grottoes, and Chinese rails. Then I had so beautiful an autumn, Italy could hardly produce a nobler scene, and this so sweetly contrasted with that perfection of nastiness, and total want of accommodation, that Scotland alone can supply."

To illustrate the poet's feeling for nature at this date, a passage, quoted by Gosse from one of Gray's letters, may be given:

"I must not close my letter without giving you one principal event of my history; which was, that (in the course of my late tour) I set out one morning before five o'clock, the moon shining through a dark and misty autumnal air, and got to the sea-coast time enough to be at the sun's levee. I saw the clouds and dark vapours open gradually to right and left, rolling over one another in great smoky wreaths, and the tide (as it flowed gently in upon the sands) first whitening, then slightly tinged with gold and blue; and all at once a little line of insufferable brightness that (before I can write these words) was grown to half an orb, and now to a whole one, too glorious to be distinctly seen. It is very odd it makes no figure on paper; yet I shall remember it as long as the sun, or at least as long as I endure. I wonder whether anybody ever saw it before? I hardly believe it."

The most noteworthy of these tours, however, was his visit to the Cumberland Lakes in 1769; and of this, for the benefit of his friend Wharton, who was unable to accompany him, he wrote a journal which contains perhaps the most exquisite and perfect prose descriptions in the English language. His appreciation for the scenery of the lake country anticipates in prose what Wordsworth was by-and-by to put into poetry.*

In 1768 the standard edition of Gray's poems was published, with some annotations by himself. In the same year Gray's powers at length received a fitting public recognition. The Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge having fallen vacant, was, at once and unsolicited, offered to Gray by the Prime Minister, the Duke of Grafton. The Professorship was worth £400 a year and was at that time regarded, in as far as duties were concerned, as purely honorary. No previous incumbent had delivered lectures, nor did Gray. It is said that he formed the design either of giving some lectures or of resigning the position, but meanwhile his health was rapidly declining, and on July the 30th, 1771, he quietly passed away in his own rooms at Cambridge.

* The similarity between the two is sometimes very striking—as in the case cited by Mr. Bradshaw: Gray wrote, "At distance heard the murmur of many waterfalls not audible in the day-time." In the *White Doe* we find Wordsworth noting the same circumstance—

A soft and lulling sound is heard
Of streams inaudible by day.

General Characteristics.

Gray's life shows that he was, first of all, a student and scholar; whatever are the results of scholarship—fastidiousness of taste, finish of technique, literary conservatism—all these we may expect to find in his poetical work. On the other hand, his life also exhibits characteristics which are rarely combined with such devotion to books—great capacities of ear and eye, powers of observation, sensitiveness to the aspects of nature, and interest in her phenomena. Besides all these, Gray had a breadth of interest, an openness to new impressions and ideas, which, as we have had occasion repeatedly to observe, gave him extraordinary sympathy with new movements in thought and feeling. Possessing this combination of opposing tendencies, and living, as he did, between two markedly different eras—the age of Pope and the age of Wordsworth—he produced poetry which has many of the qualities of the old school, yet approximates in some respects to the new.

Pope, the great representative of the poetic spirit which ruled the first half of the 18th century, says:—

True Wit is nature to advantage dress'd
What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed.

and therein emphasizes two main peculiarities of his own poetry and that of his school. It was the aim of these poets, not so much to give utterance to their own personal experiences and convictions, as to those of the world in general—"the world" here, of course, meaning the world that read their poetry, the cultivated Englishmen of that time. Hence a lack of individuality and intensity, an absence of that personal note, to which we are accustomed in the literature of our century. Further, with such a view of genius as that of the lines quoted, they would naturally tend to accentuate the importance of expression as compared with originality of thought and conception.

In Gray's youth, and long after he had reached maturity, this school of poetry was the dominant one, and he was fully submitted to its influences. His genius was not nourished outside the sphere of the prevailing literary tendencies, as was that of Burns; his nature was receptive and apt to learn, and his orthodox academic training would lead him to respect accepted standards. Accordingly, he started his poetic career as an adherent of this school. His instincts were, indeed, so conservative, his need of free play for his individuality so little exigent, that his earliest serious poetic attempts were in Latin

verse, where more than anywhere else one must follow the beaten track. The *De Principiis Cogitandi*, was not merely to be in Latin verse, but conformed in the didactic character of its theme to the prevailing fashion. Again, his most ambitious project in English verse, the poem on *The Alliance between Education and Government*, was on a similarly unpoetical subject, and written in the orthodox rhyming couplet. The fragmentary condition of these poems, however, sufficiently indicates that Gray had not yet discovered a theme and style wholly fitted to his genius. It was not in the expository heroic couplet, but in another form, also sanctioned by the practice of Dryden and the usage of the time, that Gray found a poetic medium to suit him, — the ode. The term “ode” is, in English literature, very loosely applied, but seems properly to denote a lyric which treats some impersonal and dignified theme, in a dignified and formal fashion. Hence the ode is especially differentiated from those more intimate confessions of the heart, those naive and spontaneous outpourings of personal feeling, which form so large a portion of lyric poetry. The ode then, through its giving expression rather to general than personal reflections and feelings, and by its artificial and formal character, was the species of lyric best suited to an age in the main barren of lyrical power and little favourable to anything that savoured of emotion. Gray adopts this orthodox form, and writes his earlier odes in the current orthodox style; they belong unmistakably to the 18th century epoch. Such of them as are included in these Selections serve to show that they give expression to those common and obvious reflections which might arise in the breast of any individual in connection with the special theme. There is no novelty or subtlety in thought. The writer’s personality is kept in the background. The ardour and passion which belong to the greatest lyric poets, like Shelley or Burns, could not find expression in such a form; but ardour and passion were not qualities that belonged to Gray’s nature; whereas that reserve and dignity, which he exhibited in social intercourse, are in keeping with corresponding characteristics of the ode.

Those tendencies which we have noted as ruling ones in the poetry of the time, are apt to lead to coldness and artificiality. And here is the first point in which Gray’s work surpasses that of his contemporaries and predecessors. Gray, if not passionate, was certainly a man of tender and sensitive nature, and the general sentiments expressed in his odes had at least been verified in his own feelings and experience. Hence a note of sincerity, unusual in the stilted poetry of the day:

hence occasional touches of genuine pathos, as in the finest lines of the *Eton Ode*, the first four of the second stanza.

Not merely the matter, however, but also the style and diction of these early odes are those of the dominant school; there is the same fashion for personification and allegory, the same use of conventional phraseology, and current epithets, as the "Zephyrs," "the Muse," "purple year," "Attic warbler," "painted plumage" of the *Ode on the Spring*. It is not originality of manner that lifts the style above the contemporary level; it is not a difference of kind, but of degree. This difference is, in the first place, the result of an insight into the true character of poetic diction which Gray possessed at the very outset of his poetic career. Writing to West in 1842, he says:—

"As to matter of style, I have this to say: the language of the age is never the language of poetry; except among the French, whose verse, when the thought or image does not support it, differs in nothing from prose. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself; to which almost every one, that has written, has added something. . . . In truth Shakespeare's language is one of his principal beauties; and he has no less advantage over your Addison's and Rowe's in this, than in those other great excellences you mention. *Every word in line is a picture*. Pray put me the following lines into the tongue of our modern dramatic:—

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass:
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph, etc."

Gray sees the advantage of picturesqueness in the poetic expression; it was the fault of his age to overlook this fact—that the language of poetry should be concrete, and appeal to the feelings and imagination. The tendency was to make it appeal rather to the intellect merely. To this the critics refer when they talk of the language of Pope and his school as being *rhetorical*. Language which is rhetorical differs from the common by some peculiarity that commends it to our intellect—that strikes us as clever. The concluding lines of the *Eton Ode*, "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," are rhetorical. They have merit (as the fact that they have become proverbial shows); they are condensed, paradoxical, and ingenious; hence, striking. But there is nothing in the form of the expression which makes us *feel* the truth expressed more deeply. On the other hand, the first four lines of the second stanza of the same ode are not rhetorical, but they are highly poetical:

Ah happy hills! ah pleasing shade!
Ah fields beloved in vain!
Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
A stranger yet to pain!

We feel that these lines are permeated by genuine feeling, and that this feeling is conveyed through their very form and sound. Now, Gray consciously sought after concreteness of diction, and thus raised his expression above the merely rhetorical poetry of the time. In his earliest work the difference is not marked, but the most cursory reading will reveal how his style improved in this respect, - how much more picturesque is the expression in the *Elegy*, and in the Pindaric odes than in his first poems.

Again, although the language of Gray has that tendency to a conventionalized phraseology, to the use of phrases suggested by books rather than the objects themselves, his wide reading and fine taste render his borrowings something very different from those of ordinary poets. Other men drew from a narrower range of literature, - perhaps, from the most recent English poetry, and one or two standard Latin authors; their choice was limited, their language, in consequence, hackneyed. Gray's richly stored mind afforded a vastly wider field; his fastidious taste, a higher standard. Hence the reader is delighted with the aptness and novelty of his use of older material. His poems are centos drawn from earlier writers; but like those of Milton and Tennyson, who resemble him in this peculiarity, the adaptations are so perfect, the fragments are so completely suitable and harmonious, that there is nothing of staleness and jejuneness in the result. Such a tendency, a poet thoroughly permeated with the literature of the past can scarcely escape; his reading suggests the fitting words, even when he is unconscious of the fact. Gray's citation of parallel passages in the notes to his own poems shows how unconscious he was of the extent to which he had employed the treasures of his reading. To stigmatize this practice as plagiarism, or to belittle the work that is the result, seems unwarranted. It is only genius that can thus happily avail itself of its acquired wealth. Besides, poetry of this kind carries with it a special charm and power of its own, - the charm and power of literary associations. The feelings which belong to the original passage vaguely cling to the phrase taken from it, and gave a rich and subtle effect to the new setting.

Finally, the style of Gray is superior to that of the age, from the poet's fine feeling for sensuous effects, from his skill in the minutiae of sound combinations, of the arrangement of consonants and vowels, from his ear for the music of the line. It is significant in this connection that Gray took as his master in the poetic art, not Pope, but Dryden, who surpassed Pope especially in the variety and magnificence of his rhythmical and sound effects. Speaking of Dryden, Gray said to Beattie:

“That if there were any excellence in his own numbers he had learned it wholly from that great poet, and pressed him with great earnestness to study, as his choice of words and his versification were singularly happy and harmonious.”

In this matter of sensuous charm of sound, Gray opened a vein which has been worked with brilliant results by later poets. “It is almost certain,” says Lowell, “that Coleridge learned from Gray his nicety in the use of vowel-sounds and the secret that in verse it is the letter that giveth life quite as often as the spirit.” From Coleridge this skill was transmitted to Shelley and Keats, and so onwards to Tennyson and Rossetti. It is this quality that allures the reader in the opening lines of the *Hymn to Adversity*—

Daughter of Jove, relentless power,
Thou tamer of the human breast ;

it is this quality that is one potent factor in the perennial charm of the *Elegy*, and is abundantly apparent in the finest passages of the Pindaric Odes.

Notwithstanding, however, the fact that these earlier poems of Gray distinctly belong, in their general style, to the 18th century, it must be noted that here and there the poet rises to a simplicity and directness of expression that we connect with the age that follows him, not to the one that precedes. Such qualities characterize the passage already referred to in the *Eton Ode*, the last two lines of the 2nd stanza of the *Ode on Vicissitude*, or in that other passage of the same ode which, as Mr. Gosse says, might have been written by Wordsworth himself :—

The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies
To him an opening paradise.

or those two impromptu lines which the poet made while walking with Nicholls :—

There pipes the woodlark, and the song-thrush there
Scatters his loose notes in the waste of air.

Between the earlier poems of which we have been speaking and his later odes, comes the *Elegy*, marking another stage in the poet's development and making a class by itself. It is upon this piece that Gray's fame with the world at large, mainly depends. It is probably the most widely read and appreciated poem in the language. “The fame of the *Elegy*,” writes Mr. Gosse, “has spread to all countries, and has exercised an influence on all the poetry of Europe, from Denmark to Italy, from France to Russia. With the exception of certain works of

Byron and Shakespeare, no English poem has been so widely admired and imitated abroad ; and, after more than a century of existence, we find it as fresh as ever. . . . It possesses the charm of incomparable felicity, of a melody that is not too subtle to charm every ear, of a moral persuasiveness that appeals to every generation, and of metrical skill that in each line proclaims the master. The *Elegy* may almost be looked upon as the typical piece of English verse, our poem of poems ; not that it is the most brilliant, or original or profound lyric in our language, but because it combines in more balanced perfection than any other all the qualities that go to the production of a fine poetical effect." "The reason of this extensive popularity," writes Professor Hales, "is perhaps to be sought in the fact that it expresses in an exquisite manner feelings and thoughts that are universal. In the current of ideas in the *Elegy*, there is perhaps nothing that is rare, or exceptional, or out of the common way. The musings are of the most rational and obvious character possible ; it is difficult to conceive of any one musing under similar circumstances who should not muse so ; but are not the less deep and moving on that account."

In general character, then, this poem resembles its predecessors. The theme, however, is more catholic in its interest and more profound in emotional import. Further, it suits exactly the genius of the writer ; the attitude of the poet in the poem is that of Gray in life, that of an onlooker,—an onlooker, indeed, who sympathizes with and is affected by the scenes which he views, but is himself somewhat aloof from it all ; one, too, who is most sensitive to its sadder aspects and touched with the spirit of brooding melancholy. In the *Elegy*, the perfection of phrase and music, instead of being occasional, is almost unbroken, at least through two-thirds of the poem. But there is a deeper reason for its superiority. Although Gray's work here, as elsewhere, shows the bookish and literary influence, this poem is more manifestly the direct outpouring of his own experience and observation. The *Elegy* is not made from, or through, books ; it is made direct from nature, though under the guidance of conscious art and literary models. The scenery, somewhat conventional though it may be, is not the scenery of Pope's *Pastorals*—a mere mosaic of literary phrases. To Gray the lover and observer of nature, not to Gray the student of books, the fundamental excellence of this poem is due ; the sentiments, not less than the pervading feeling, come from the poet's heart, though he may also have noted them in his reading. The power of the poem springs not merely from superficial felicity of expression, but, in an especial

degree, from the poet's treatment of the substantial thought and emotion. As Mr. Leslie Stephen says :—"It is a commonplace thing to say that the power of giving freshness to commonplace is amongst the highest proofs of poetical genius. One reason is, apparently, that it is so difficult to extract the pure and ennobling element from the coarser materials in which any obvious truth comes to be imbedded. The difficulty of feeling rightly is as great as the difficulty of finding a worthy utterance of the feeling. Everybody may judge of the difficulty of Gray's task, who will attend to what passes at a funeral. On such an occasion, one is inclined to fancy, *a priori*, mourners will drop all affectation and speak poetically because they will speak from their hearts; but, as a matter of fact there is no occasion on which there is generally such a lavish expenditure of painful and jarring sentiment, of vulgarity, affectation, and insincerity; and thus Gray's meditations stand out from other treatments of a similar theme not merely by the technical merits of the language, but by the admirable truth and purity of the underlying sentiment. The temptation to be too obtrusively moral and improving, to indulge in inappropriate epigram, in sham feeling, in idle sophistry, in strained and exaggerated gloominess, or even on occasion to heighten the effect by inappropriate humour, is so strong with most people that Gray's kindness and delicacy of feeling, qualities which were perceptible to the despised public, must be regarded as contributing quite as much to the success of the 'Elegy' as the technical merits of form, which, moreover, can hardly be separated from the merits of the substance."

The third division of Gray's work, his Pindaric Odes, contains his most original contribution to poetry. Besides odes of the kind already written by Gray, which consist of a series of regular stanzas like any other lyric, and which originated in imitations of Horace, there also existed in English what was called the Pindaric Ode, which consisted of an irregular series of lines of varying lengths, rhyming in a capricious manner—easy, one would imagine, to write, and correspondingly difficult to read. Nothing could exceed the unsatisfactoriness of the form, or rather formlessness, of this kind of writing. Gray gave shape to this formlessness by imitating the stanzaic arrangement of Pindar. In each of Gray's Pindaric Odes, the stanzas, which are themselves of a very elaborate character, are arranged in groups of three. The first two stanzas of all the groups are alike in metrical structure; whereas the third stanzas in the groups (3rd, 6th, and 9th) correspond to one another, but differ from the opening pairs. The style of Pindar

is further imitated in the abruptness of the thought-transitions, in the boldness of the imagery, in the union of the subject and simile instead of their parallel expression (see the opening of *The Progress of Poesy* and Gray's note thereon), in the number and brevity of the allusions, and in the general splendour and dignity of style. These odes far surpass the earlier in the pomp and picturesqueness of their diction, in the bold and effective metrical and sound effects, and in the number of felicitous lines and phrases. The successful development of the theme, what is called the *evolution*, is another merit of the Pindaric odes, as well as to a less degree of his other poems. "Gray," writes Matthew Arnold, "holds his high rank as a poet, not merely by the beauty and grace of passages in his poems; not merely by a diction generally pure in an age of impure diction; he holds it above all, by the power and skill with which the evolution of his poems is conducted." "The term 'evolution,'" says Gosse, "as applied in poetical criticism, describes the mode in which a poem is built up, or grows up, like a building or tree, into a certain form which is the most appropriate and sufficient for the thoughts and images which possess the poet's mind. Much admirable poetry, most poetry of the romantic class, has no evolution at all, but ceases abruptly, when the emotion flags. . . . The least inspired of Gray's odes has this peculiarity, that it starts from a point which the poet has fixed upon, covers a certain area of thought which he has accurately measured, and closes inevitably at the moment when he has said all that occurs to him and no more." In their style and metrical effects they depart farther than any of the previous poems of Gray from the stereotyped manner of the 18th century. These peculiarities of theirs have excited the admiration of poets and professional critics; but the broader human interest of the *Elegy*, and its more profound and sincere emotional tone, have always given it the preference with the general reader. This preference is at least justified by the fact that the *Elegy* is undoubtedly more perfect of its kind than the odes are in their kind, although Gray may be more original in the latter, and at points reach a higher imaginative flight.

In conclusion, Gray's great defect as a poet comes from a certain artificiality and coldness which arise in no small measure from his fastidiousness of taste, and the consequent endless pains and labour with which he amended and polished all he wrote. But from the same source comes, also, his strength. "Gray's great claim to the rank he holds is derived from his almost unrivalled skill as an artist, in words and sounds,

as an artist, too, who knew how to compose his thoughts and images with a thorough knowledge of perspective. This explains why he is so easy to remember, why, though he wrote so little, so much of what he wrote is familiar to men's tongues. There are certain plants that have seeds with hooks by which they cling to any passing animal and impress his legs into the service of their locomotion and distribution. Gray's phrases have the same gift of hooking themselves into the memory, and it was due to the exquisite artifice of their construction." (Lowell.) Another defect in Gray, if we are to measure him against other poets, is the small quantity of his production. He himself expresses a humorous fear lest his works may be mistaken for those of a flea or a pismire. The cause of this lack of productive power has often been discussed. It does not seem far to seek. There were an extraordinary number of repressive forces in Gray's case, each of which may have been overcome in the case of other writers, but their combination was invincible. We need only note lack of health and physical energy, natural fastidiousness of taste intensified by scholarly pursuits, monotony of life and want of stimulating social environment, absence of external motives, such as the need of making a living, any intense desire for riches or fame, lack of the social and practical instinct which urges us to do something for society, finally, deficiency in intense passion, and in feelings and convictions which force themselves into utterance. Gray's poetical work is not only limited in its amount, it does not exhibit the full breadth of his character. To understand these his life and letters must be studied. The man here is greater than the poet.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY.—The fullest life is that by Gosse (*English Men of Letters Series*); see also the article on Gray by Leslie Stephen in *The Dictionary of National Biography*. The standard edition of the complete works, including letters, journals, etc., is that edited by Gosse in 4 vols. (Macmillan); of his poetical works there is a good edition edited by Bradshaw (New Aldine Series). Annotated editions: Gray's Poems, ed. by Bradshaw (Macmillan's *English Classics*); Select Poems ed. by Rolfe (Harper Bros.); Selected Poems ed. by Gosse (Clarendon Press); the *Elegy*, *Bard*, and *Progress of Poesy* are contained in Hales' *Longer English Poems* (Macmillan); Selections from Gray's Poetry and Prose ed. by Phelps in the *Athenæum Press Series* pub. by Ginn & Co., Boston (this edition has the advantage of containing an interesting series of extracts from Gray's prose, is fully up to date and very accurately edited); from these volumes, especially the first two mentioned, the annotations in the present volume are

mainly drawn. Critical Essays, etc. : by Lowell in *Latest Literary Essays* (the best essay on Gray) ; by M. Arnold in *Essays in Criticism*, 2nd series (a reprint of the article in Ward's *English Poets*, vol. iii.) ; by Leslie Stephen in *Hours in a Library*, 3rd series ; by D. C. Tovey, in his Introduction to *Gray and his Friends*.

ODE ON THE SPRING.

"The Ode on the Spring exists in Gray's handwriting among the Stonchewer MSS. at Pembroke College, and is there entitled 'Noontide. An Ode.' At the end of the poem Gray has written :— 'The beginning of June, 1742, sent to Fav. : not knowing that he was then dead.' Favonius was the name given by Gray to Richard West, who died on the 1st of June, 1742, at Hatfield. Gray had come down from London to Stoke in the last days of May, and must have written this poem almost immediately upon his arrival at West End, the house of his uncle, Mr. Rogers, afterwards the home of the poet's mother until her death. It was first published in Dodsley's Collection of Poems by Several Hands, 1748, ii., 271, under the title of Ode, and as the first of Gray's Six Poems of 1753. The notes were first added by Gray in 1768." (Gosse.)

L. Cf. *Comus*, 984-7 :

Along the crisped shades and bowers,
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring,
The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring.

Also *Par. Lost*, iv., 266-8 :

universal Pan
Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance
Led on the eternal Spring.

Hours. Goddesses who presided over the order of nature, and of the seasons (Gk. *ῥαῖ*, a season), represented as blooming maidens bearing the products of the seasons, and associated with Venus.

rosy-bosom'd. Gk. *ῥοδοδάκτυλος* ; cf. "rosy-fingered," "rosy-armed," etc. It has also been suggested that the epithet may mean "with bosom full of roses" ; but the ordinary use of such compounds in Greek renders this improbable.

2. "Venus is here employed, in conformity to the mythology of the Greeks, as the source of creation and beauty." (Wakefield.)

3. **Disclose.** Open; cf. *Hamlet*, I., 2, 39-40.

4. **purple.** Employed here not with definite reference to a special colour, but vaguely (as the Latin "purpureus" in Virgil, etc.) of what is brilliant and resplendent. Cf. *Perrigilium Veneris*, 13: "Ipsa gemmis purpurantem pingit annum floribus," and Pope, *Pastorals*, i., 28: "And lavish nature paints the purple year," and Milton, *Lycidas*, 141: "And purple all the ground with vernal flowers."

5. **The Attic warbler.** The nightingale was called "Attic" by the ancient poets because Attica abounded in them, or because of the story that Philomela, the daughter of Pandion, king of Athens, was changed into a nightingale. Hence Milton writes (*Par. Reg.*, iv., 245) of Athens:

where the Attic bird
Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long.

pours her throat. Cf. Pope, *Essay on Man*, iii., 33: "Is it for thee the linnet pours her throat."

12. **browner.** Cf. Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 134: "And shadows brown that Sylvan loves," and *Par. Lost*, iv., 245: "Where the unpiet'd shade imbrown'd the noontide bowers." Ruskin is cited by Rolfe as denying the existence of brown in nature.

14. Gray himself gives, in a note on this line, the quotation from *Mid. Night's Dream*, ii., 1: "a bank o'er canopied with luscious woodbine."

19-20. These lines were originally printed :

How low, how indigent the Proud,
How little are the Great !

23. **the peopled air.** Cf. Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 8: "The gay motes that people the sunbeams."

27. Gray quotes in his note Virgil, *Geo.*, iv., 59: "Nare per aestatem liquidam," which is translated by Lonsdale and Lee "floating through the cloudless summer air," literally, "through the liquid summer." Gray imitates the Latin poetic usage, employing "liquid" in the sense of "clear," "limpid," with the additional suggestion of fluidity.

29. **trim.** Cf. *The Bard*, 73: "In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes."

30. Gray quotes Milton, *Par. Lost*, vii., 405 :

Sporting with quick glance,
Show to the sun their waved coats dropt with gold.

31. In his note Gray refers to the following passage from *The Grotto*, by M. Green, a minor poet, author of *The Spleen*, who lived from 1696-1737 :

While insects from the threshold preach,
And minds disposed to musing teach ;
Proud of strong limbs and painted hues,
They perish by the slightest bruise ;
Or maladies begun within
Destroy more slow life's trail machine ;
From maggot-youth, thro' change of state,
They feel like us the turns of fate ;
Some born to creep have lived to fly,
And changed earth's cells for dwellings high ;
And some that did their six wings keep,
Before they died been forced to creep.
They politics, like ours, profess ;
The greater prey upon the less.
Some strain on foot huge loads to bring,
Some toil incessant on the wing ;
Nor from their vigorous schemes desist
Till death ; and then they are never mist.
Some frolic, toil, marry, increase,
Are sick and well, have war and peace ;
And broke with age in half a day,
Yield to successors and away.

Gray sends a quotation from the same poem, including the passage just cited, in a letter to Walpole. "I send you," he writes, "a bit of a thing for two reasons : first, because it is of one of your favourites, Mr. M. Green ; and next, because I would do justice. The thought on which my second ode turns [referring to the *Ode on Spring*] is manifestly stole from hence ; not that I knew it at the time, but having seen this many years before, to be sure it imprinted itself on my memory, and, forgetting its author, I took it for my own" (p. 222, vol. ii. of *Gray's Works*, ed. Gosse).

47. painted. Cf. Virgil, *Aen.*, iv., 525 ; "pictaeque volucres," and Milton, *Par. Lost*, vii., 433 :

the smaller birds with song
Solaced the woods, and spread their painted wings.

ODE ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE.

In Gray's MS. at Pembroke College, the title is, *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College, Windsor, and the Adjacent Country*, and it is dated "Stoke, Aug., 1742." It was the first of Gray's English productions to appear in print, being published anonymously in a folio pamphlet in 1747. It appeared in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* in 1748, and among the *Six Poems* of 1753. In the edition of 1768, Gray added some notes, and prefixed a Greek motto from Menander: ἄνθρωπος, ἰκανῇ πρόθεσιν εἰς τὸ δυστυχεῖν (i.e., I am a man,—a sufficient excuse for being miserable). The prospect before the poet's eyes in this poem is visible from the neighbourhood of Stoke Pogis church, which is about four miles north of the Thames at Eton, where Gray was at school from about 1727-1734.

3. **Science.** Used in its original sense of 'knowledge in general,' not in the restricted sense which the word usually has in our day; cf. *Elegy*, 119.

4. "King Henry the Sixth, founder of Eton College" (Gray). He had a reputation for sanctity; cf. the reference to him in *The Bard*, 90: "the meek usurper's holy head"; also, Shakespeare's *Rich. III.*, v., 1: "Holy King Henry," and iv., 4: "when holy Harry died."

5. Windsor and Eton are on opposite sides of the Thames, Eton on the northern side, and hence nearer Stoke Pogis.

8. The post-position of the preposition is common in Shakespeare, especially in the case of dissyllabic prepositions; see Abbot's *Shakespearean Grammar*, § 204.

9. **the hoary Thames.** Ancient art represented river-gods in the form of aged men; cf. also Milton, *Lycidas*, 103: "Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow."

10. **silver-winding.** For the form of the compound, cf. "fair-winding" in Thomson's *Summer*, 1417.

12 **beloved in vain.** Mitford explains: "The fields are *belored* as the scene of youthful pleasures, and as affording the promise of happiness to come; but this promise never was fulfilled."

15. **from ye.** "Ye" is properly nominative, "you" objective; but the distinction was not always observed, e.g., Milton, *Comus*, 216: "I see ye visibly."

19. Gray quotes, in his note, Dryden, on the Pythagorean Philosophy : " And bees their honey redolent of spring." (From Dryden's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. xv.)

21. **Father Thames.** Cf. Dryden, *Annus Mirabilis*, st. 232 : " Old father Thames raised up his reverend head," and Green, *Grotto* : " Say, father Thames."

23. **margent.** A variant for 'margin'; so Milton, *Comus*, 232 : " By slow Meander's margent green."

25-26. The reference is to swimming, as Bentley's illustration shows.

27. **captive.** An example of *prolepsis*, the epithet expressing the result of the action indicated by the verb.

29. In the Pembroke MS., this line reads : " To chase the hoop's elusive speed."

33. **'Gainst graver hours.** In preparation for lesson hours.

37. Cf. Cowley, *Ode to Hobbes*, 53-55 :

Thy nobler vessel the vast ocean tries
And nothing sees but seas and skies.
Till unknown regions it descries.

40. Mr. Gosse illustrates this line by a quotation from R. L. Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* : " Fear is the strong passion ; it is with fear that you must trifle, if you wish to taste the intensest joys of living."

45. **buxom.** Lively and vigorous.

55-6. Cf. Broome's *Ode on Melancholy*, which has several points of resemblance with the ode before us :

While round stern ministers of fate,
Pain and Disease and Sorrow, wait.

'em. From Old English "hem" (not from them), now a vulgarism or colloquialism, but frequently found in good writers of 18th century.

59. **murderous.** "murch'rous" is the proper reading. In the Pembroke MS. the reading was originally "griesly."

61. **fury Passions.** Cf. Pope, *Essay on Man*, iii., 167 : " The fury Passions from that blood began."

63. fol. An excess of personification here,—a common fault in 18th century poetry.

79. Gray quotes, in his note on this line, Dryden, *Palamon and Arcite*: "Madness laughing in his ireful mood."

81. Cf. *Othello*, iii., 3: "Declin'd into the vale of years."

83. Cf. Dryden, *State of Innocence*, Act v., 1: "With all the numerous family of Death"; and Pope, *Essay on Man*, ii., 118: "Hate, Fear, and Grief, the family of Pain."

84. *queen*, i.e., "Death," though usually personified as masculine.

85. This whole passage may be compared with Milton, *Par. Lost*, xii., 477-493, and Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi., 275 fol.

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD.

"The *Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard* was begun at Stoke Pogis in the autumn of 1742, probably on the occasion of the funeral of Jonathan Rogers, on the 31st of October. In the winter of 1749 Gray took it in hand again, at Cambridge, after the death of his aunt, Mary Antrobus. He finished at Stoke on the 12th of June, 1750. The poem was circulated in MS., and on the 10th of February, 1751, Gray received a letter from the editor of the Magazine of Magazines, asking leave to publish it. The poet refused, and wrote next day to Horace Walpole, directing him to bring it out in pamphlet form. Accordingly, as soon as the 16th of February, there appeared anonymously "*An Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard*." (Gosse.)

The following is from Gray's letter to Walpole alluded to above: "Yesterday I had the misfortune of receiving a letter from certain gentlemen (as their bookseller expresses it), who have taken the Magazine of Magazines into their hands. They tell me that an *ingenious* Poem, called reflections in a Country Church-yard, has been communicated to them, which they are printing forthwith; that they are informed that the *excellent* author of it is I by name, and that they beg not only his *indulgence*, but the *honour* of his correspondence, etc. As I am not at all disposed to be either so indulgent, or so correspondent, as they desire, I have but one way left to escape the honour they would inflict upon me; and therefore am obliged to desire you would make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy, but without my name, in what form is most

convenient for him, but on his best paper and character; he must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued beyond them; and the title must be—Elegy, written in a Country Church-Yard. If he would add a line or two to say that it came into his hands by accident, I should like it better."

The poem immediately became widely popular, as is shown by the following memorandum written on the margin of the Pembroke MS. of the poem: "publish'd in Febry. 1751 by Dodsley: & went thro' four editions; in two months; and afterwards a fifth, 6th, 7th & 8th, 9th & 10th & 11th printed also in 1753, with Mr. Bentley's Designs, of wch there is a 2d Edition & again by Dodsley in his Miscellany, Vol: 4th & in a Scotch Collection call'd *the Union*, translated into Latin by Chr: Austey Esq. & the Revd Mr. Roberts, & publish'd in 1762; & again in the same year by Rob: Lloyd, M: A:" Further testimony to its popularity are the numerous translations "including one in Hebrew, seven in Greek, twelve in Latin, thirteen in Italian, fifteen in French, six in German, and one in Portuguese." Wolfe's tribute to the poem is familiar. On the night of Sept. 12, 1759, the eve of the battle of the Plains of Abraham, he repeated the poem to the officers about him as their boat was being carried by the tide along the river through the darkness. "Gentlemen," he said as he finished, "I would rather be the author of that poem than take Quebec." (For critical remarks on the *Elegy*, see pp. 141-3 of this volume.)

The edition of 1751 having been hurriedly printed, was inaccurate. The accepted text is that of the first collected edition of Gray's poems in 1768. Three copies of the *Elegy* in Gray's handwriting are still in existence. One of these seems to have been the original draft and contains the largest number of variant readings. It is called by Gosse the Mason MS. The other two are seemingly copies made when the *Elegy* had almost received its final form. One of these is at Pembroke College, and is known as the Pembroke MS.; the other is in the British Museum and is referred to as the Egerton MS. The more interesting variants are cited in the following notes.

Mason says that Gray "originally gave it only the simple title of 'Stanzas Written in a Country Churchyard,'" but that he "persuaded him to call it an Elegy."

The opening stanzas may be compared with Collins' *Ode to Evening* (quoted in the appendix to this volume), especially with stanza 10. Collins' odes were published in 1746.

Mr. Phelps draws attention to resemblances in the *Elegy* to Joseph Warton's *Ode to Evening*, published in 1746, *e.g.*:

“Hail, meek-eyed maiden, clad in sober grey,
Whose soft approach the weary woodman loves,
As, homeward bent to kiss his prattling babes,
He jocund whistles thro' the twilight groves.

and also to a stanza of Ambrose Philips' *Pastoral II.*:

And now behold the sun's departing ray
O'er yonder hill, the sign of ebbing day.
With songs the jovial hinds return from plow,
And unyok'd heifers, pacing homeward, low.

1. Gray, in his note on this line, quotes Dante, *Purgatorio*, 8:

squilla di lontano
Che paia 'l giorno pianger, che si muore.

rendered by Longfellow:

from far away a bell
That seemeth to deplore the dying day.

1. **The curfew.** The curfew bell was originally rung at eight o'clock as a signal for extinguishing fires; after the original practice had ceased to be observed, the word was applied to an evening bell. Cf. Milton, *Il Pen.*, 74, and *Comus*, 435.

parting. Cf. l. 89 below, also Goldsmith, *Deserted Village*, 171: “Beside the bed where parting life was laid.”

6. **all.** The Mason MS. reads “now.”

air is, of course, object, not subject of “holds.”

7. Cf. *Macbeth*, iii., 2:

The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,
Hath rung night's yawning peal.

11-12. In the Mason MS. “stray too” is written above “wandering,” and “pry into” above “molest her,” the poet's idea in the latter case being probably to strike out “molest” and “ancient.”

ancient solitary reign. Cf. Virgil's *Georgics*, iii., 476: “desertaque regna pastorum.”

reign, *i.e.*, domain; cf. Pope, *Iliad*: “The wrath which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy reign.”

13. “This is the stanza,” says Mr. Gosse, “which bears most certainly the stamp of Stoke Pogis churchyard.” The yew tree still stands there, according to Mr. Bradshaw.

"As he stands in the churchyard, he thinks only of the poorer people (comp. below, *passive*) because the better to do lay interred inside the church . . . In Gray's time and long before, and some time after it, the former resting-place was for the poor, the latter for the rich" (Holes).

16. *rude* — rustically simple.

hamlet. In the Mason MS. this word replaces "village," which has been scored out.

17. In the Mason MS., this stanza reads :

For ever sleep; the breezy Call of Morn,
On swallow twitting from the strawbuilt Shed,
Or Chaunticleer so shrill or echoing Hail
No more shall rouse them from their lowly Bed.

incense-breathing. Cf. Milton, *Arethusa*, 56 : "the odorous breath of morn," and *Par. Lost*, ix., 192 :

Now when as sacred light begins to dawn
In Eden on the humid flowers that breath'd
Their morning incense.

18. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, viii., 455 :

Evandrum ex humili tecto lux suscitât albam,
Et incutiit vulnere sub calvine cantus.

19. Cf. Milton, *Par. Lost*, vii., 413 :

The crested cock, whose clarion sounds
The silent hours.

and *Hamlet*, i., 1 :

The cock that is the trumpet of the morn
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day.

20. *lowly bed*. The humble bed where they have been sleeping, with, perhaps, a suggestion of the grave also.

21. Reminiscences from earlier poetry probably suggested this stanza ; cf. the following passages :

Jam, jam non domus accipiet te laeta, neque uxor
Optima, nec dulces occurrent oscula nati
Præcipere, et tacita pectus dulcedine tanget.

—Lucretius, iii., 894.

Quod si pudica mulier in partem juvet
Domum atque dulces liberos, . . .
Sacrum et vetustis exstruat lignis focum
Lassi sub adventum viri.

Horace, *Epode*, ii., 39.

In vain for him the officious wife prepares
 The fire fair-blazing, and the vestment warm ;
 In vain his little children, peeping out
 Into the mingling storm, demand their sire
 With tears of artless innocence.

—Thomson, *Winter*, 311.

22. ply her evening care. Is busy with the household duties of the evening. This use of a dignified abstract phrase, instead of a more commonplace, but more effective concrete one, is characteristic of the poetic style of the time ; contrast it with Wordsworth's—

And she I cherished *turned her wheel*
 Beside an English fire.

24. envied. The Mason MS. furnishes two other readings for this word, viz.: “coming” and “doubtful.”

26. broke. Frequently used in Elizabethan English and subsequently for “broken.”

29-32. Gray's plea for admitting the everyday joys and sorrows of commonplace people as a fit theme for poetry, marks the transition from the narrower poetry of the 18th century to the poetry of the new age,—the poetry of Burns, Wordsworth, Cowper, and Crabbe.

35. await. “Awaits” is the reading of all the MSS., and of the editions published under Gray's supervision.

37-8. In the Mason MS., the first two lines read :

Forgive ye Proud, the involuntary Fault,
 If Memory to these no Trophies raise.

39. long-drawn is very suggestive of the effect produced by the vista of column and arches in a Gothic building.

fretted, in architecture, means adorned with fillets intersecting at right angles ; according to Skeat this is a different word etymologically from “to fret” (A.S. *fraetwian*) to adorn, but in use the poets doubtless confuse them. In this passage it is probably used in its narrower sense, but in the wider sense in *Hamlet*, ii., 2 : “This majestical roof fretted with golden fire.”

40. Cf. Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 161 :

There let the pealing organ blow
 To the full-voiced quire below,
 In service high, and anthem clear.

41. storied urn. Among the ancients urns were used for holding the ashes of the dead, and are frequently employed as decorations of modern

tombs; "urn" is often used in the sense of grave. Cf. *Henry V.* 1, 2; *Lyceidas*, 20. "*Storied*," bearing a pictured representation or inscription; cf. *Il Pentecosto*, 159: "With storied windows richly dight."

animated bust. Cf. Pope, *Temple of Fame*, 73: "Heroes in animated marble frown."

43. provoke. The original reading in the Mason MS. is "awake"; "provoke" is not employed in the usual sense, but in its original, etymological meaning "to call forth." (Lat. *provocare*.)

47. rod. In Mason MS. "Reins."

48. living lyre. Cf. Cowley, *The Resurrection*, 13: "Begin the song, and strike the living lyre," and Pope, *Windsor Forest*, 281:

Who now shall charm the shades where Cowley strung
His living harp.

50. unroll. The word is suggested by the books of ancient libraries—rolls of manuscript.

51. repress'd. In Mason MS. "had damp'd" is the original reading with "depress'd" and "repress'd" written above.

rage. Commonly used in the poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for poetic fire; cf. Pope, *Prologue to Cato*, 43; Dryden, *Mac-flecknoe*, 128; Collins, *The Passions*, 111.

52. genial. Probably there is a reference here to several senses of the word,— "productive," "native," "full of life and warmth."

53. purest ray serene. This placing of one adjective before, and of the other after, the noun is a favourite device of Milton.

55. The same idea had already found frequent expression in the poets; cf. Pope, *Rape of the Lock*, iv., 153: "Like roses that in deserts bloom and die"; Chamberlayne, *Pharonida*, ii., 4: "Like beauteous flowers that vainly waste their scent Of odours in unhaunted deserts," etc.

57. In the Mason MS. the names "Cato," "Tully," and "Caesar" occupy respectively the places of "Hamperden," "Milton," and "Cromwell." These classical references were in the taste of the earlier half of the 18th century. The change is in keeping with Gray's general position in the development of poetry, marking as it does a transition from the earlier to the later taste and style.

John Hamperden (1594-1643) in 1636 refused to pay the ship-money tax which Charles was illegally levying. *Milton*, 1608-1674. *Cromwell*

(1599-1658) was regarded in the time of Gray with less favour than has been customary in our century—a change which has been in no small measure due to Carlyle in his *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*.

64. Their acts determine the condition of the nation, hence the contentment, misery, etc., perceptible among the people in general are the external records of the actions of these great men.

65. **Their lot forbad.** This is the most striking case of *overflow* of sense from one stanza to another in the poem; cf. also ll. 67-97. Compare, also, similar cases in *In Memoriam*, e.g., the last two stanzas of cxxxi. In the case of each of these poems an occasional overflow is not unpleasing, but the frequent recurrence of this phenomenon would evidently destroy the characteristic metrical effect.

lot. In the Mason MS. "Fate" is the original reading.

circumscribed. Mr. Gosse calls this "a prosaic and unwieldy word, which nothing but habit prevents from disturbing our sense of the melody of this passage." 2

66. **growing.** In the Mason MS. "struggling" is the original reading.

69. They repress truth which they know to be truth ("conscious") and which is struggling for utterance.

70. **ingenuous** conveys the double sense of 'natural' and 'noble.'

71-2. The Mason MS. reads in place of *heap* "at," with "crowns" as an alternative. "Burn" is the original reading of the Mason MS., but it is struck out and "With" written above; "hallow'd by" or "in" is the original reading for "kindled at."

Or heap the shrine, etc. In the days of Gray and earlier, when an author's direct revenue from the sale of books was usually small and uncertain, and when, accordingly, writers depended largely on patronage, such flattery of the rich and great was very common.

72. After this line in the Mason MS., come the following stanzas which have a line drawn through them:

The thoughtless World to Majesty may bow,
Exalt the brave and idolize Success;
But more to Innocence their Safety owe
Than Power and Genius e'er conspir'd to bless.
And thou, who mindful of the unhonoured Dead
Dost in these Notes their artless Tale relate,
By Night and lonely Contemplation led
To linger in the gloomy Walks of Fate.

Hark how the sacred Chorus, that broods around,
 Bids every fierce tumultuous Passion cease,
 In still small Accents whispering from the Ground
 A grateful Hymn, so of eternal Peace.

No more with Reason and thyself at Strife
 Goe anxious Cares and endless Wishes roam
 But thro' the Cool sequester'd Vale of Life
 Pursue the silent Tenor of thy Doom.

Thus the poem was originally intended to close, the "hoary-headed swain," and the epitaph being after-thoughts.

73. The phrase introduced by "far" does not belong to "stray"; the meaning is "they being far from," etc.

madding for "maddening"; cf. Milton, *Par. Lost*, vi., 219; "the madding wheels Of brazen chariots rag'd."

74. learn'd. The Mason MS. has "knew."

76. noiseless. The Mason MS. has "silent" written above this word.

tenor. An uninterrupted course; so in Latin; cf. Virgil, *Æneid*, xi., 340; "Proclius hasta fugit servatque evincta tenorem."

77. e'en. So Palgrave reads here and in ll. 91 and 92, but the authorities all read "ev'n."

yet refers back to l. 37.

78. still. 'Always'—a frail memorial is erected in each case. Gosse gives the sense as "still standing, in spite of its frail character"—an explanation which seems erroneous.

81. un' unletter'd Muse. This far-fetched designation for an uneducated writer or stone-cutter is a characteristic example of the excessively artificial poetic diction of the 18th century.

82. elegy. The Mason MS. has "Epitaph." Hales remarks that the age of Gray was "much given to elaborate epitaphs and elegies," and refers to the poetical collections of the day and to the monuments in Westminster Abbey.

84. "Mitford censures *teach* as ungrammatical; but it may be justified as a 'construction according to sense.'" (Rolfe.)

85. Mr. Gosse says: "It is to be observed that the poetical fire which sustained the earlier part of the poem on so high a level, is now beginning visibly to flag."

With regard to the interpretation of this stanza, Mr. Hales has the following note: "At first glance it might seem that *to dumb Forgetfulness a prey* was in apposition to *who*, and the meaning was 'who that now lies forgotten,' etc.; in which case the 2nd line of the stanza must be closely connected with the 4th; for the question of the passage is not 'whoever died,' but 'who ever died without wishing to be remembered?' But in this way of interpreting this difficult stanza (i) there is comparatively little force in the appositional phrase, (ii) there is a second awkwardness in deferring so long the clause (virtually adverbial though apparently co-ordinate) in which, as has just been noticed, the point of the question really lies. Perhaps, therefore, it is better to take the phrase *to dumb Forgetfulness a prey* as in fact the completion of the predicate resign'd, and interpret thus: 'Who ever resigned this life of his with all its pleasures and all its pains to be utterly ignored and forgotten?' = 'who ever, when resigning it, reconciled himself to its being forgotten?' In this case the 2nd half of the stanza echoes the thought of the first half."

Notwithstanding the force of the objections urged by Mr. Hales, the present editor agrees with Mr. Rolfe, who prefers "to take *to dumb Forgetfulness a prey* as appositional and proleptic, and not as the grammatical complement of *resigned*: Who, yielding himself up a prey to dumb Forgetfulness, ever resigned this life without casting a longing, lingering look behind?"

89. This stanza contains the answer to the question of the preceding stanza.

parting. Cf. l. 1 above.

90. *pious*, in the sense of the Latin "*pius*," *dutiful*, tears which are the natural due of the situation; cf. Ovid, *Tristia* IV., iii., 41: "*piae lacrimae*" and for the idea, *Tristia* III., iii., 83:—

Quamvis in cinerem corpus mutaverit ignis,
Sentiet officium maesta favilla pium.

91-92. These lines are based on the fact that we imagine ourselves, even in our graves, yearning for sympathy, and that this often finds expression in the form and thought of epitaphs; see, as an illustration, the epitaphs in Wordsworth's works translated from Chiabrera; so, for example, ix. opens:

Pause, courteous spirit—Balbi supplicates
That Thou with no reluctant voice, for him
Here laid in mortal darkness, would'st prefer
A prayer to the Redeemer of the world.

Gray cites in his note on these lines Petrarch, *Sonnet* 169 :

Ch' il veggjo vel pensier, dolce mio fuoco,
 Frodda una lingua e due begli occhi chiusi,
 Remaner doppo noi pien di faville."

translated by Nott :

These, my sweet fair, so warns prophetic thought,
 (Close'd thy bright eye, and mute thy poet's tongue)
 E'en after death shall still with sparks be fraught,

where "These" refers to the poet's love and his songs concerning it, or as Gray himself renders the lines into Latin :

Infelix musa aeternos spirabit amores,
 Ardebitque urna multa favilla mea.

With the whole stanza Hales compares Tibullus to his Delia :

Te spectem, suprema mihi quum venerit hora :
 Te teneam moriens deficiente manu.
 Flebis et aratro positum me, Delia, lecto,
 Tristibus et lacrimis escula iuxta dabis.
 Flebis ; non tua sunt duro praeordia ferro
 Vinceta, nec in tenero stat tibi corpe silex.

92. In the Mason MS. "And buried Ashes glow with social Fires."

93. The Mason MS. reads :

If chance that e'er some pensive Spirit move
 By sympathetic Musings here delay'd
 With vain, tho' kind Enquiry shall explore
 Thy once-loved Haunt, this long deserted Shade,

For thee. As regards thee.

95. **chance.** Used as an adverb here,—*by chance.*

96. **kindred**, as possessing the same contemplative and melancholy bent of mind as the poet.

99-100. The Mason MS. reads :

With hasty Footsteps brush the Dews away
 On the high Brow of yonder hanging Lawn.

100. Cf. Milton, *Lycidas*, 25 : "ere the high lawns appeared Under the opening eyelids of the morn, We drove afield."

Lawn means originally "a cleared place in a wood," and as used by Milton and Gray probably means no more than "meadow"; certainly it is not employed in the modern sense.

In the Mason MS. the following stanza follows line 100 :

Him have we seen the Green-wood Side along,
While o'er the Heath we hid, our Labours done,
Oft as the Woodlark piped her farewell song
With wistful Eyes pursue the setting Sun.

101. The Mason MS. reads: "Oft at the foot of yonder hoary Beech" with "spreading" and "nodding" written above "hoary."

Cf. *As You Like It*, II., i.:

as he lay along
Under an oak whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along this road.

In a letter to Walpole, written in 1737, Gray describes some venerable beeches near his uncle's residence at Furnham, and goes on: "At the foot of one of these squats ME (*il penseroso*), and there I grow to the trunk for a whole morning."

105. **Hard by yon wood.** The Mason MS. reads: "With gestures quaint."

106. The Mason MS. reads originally "fond conceits" for "wayward fancies"; in place of "*he would*" it has "wont to," "loved to" (both struck out) and "would he."

107. **woeful-wan.** Not 'woefully wan,' but 'wan from woe.' There is a hyphen in the Pembroke MS., but not in the editions printed in Gray's lifetime.

108. **hopeless** is proleptic, being really the result of "cross'd."

110. The original reading was: "By the Heath-side, and at his fay'rite Tree."

113. **due.** Originally "meet."

114. **church-way path.** Cf. *Mid. Night's Dream*, v. 1:

Now it is the time of night
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth its sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide.

"The graveyard at Stoke Pogis is reached by paths leading to the road; and it is one of these paths rather than a path in the graveyard that is referred to." (Bradshaw.)

115. The "hoary-headed swain" could not read; hence the emphasis.

116. Originally: "Wrote on the Stone beneath that aged Thorn."

Gray originally inserted at this place a very beautiful stanza, which was printed in some of the first editions, but afterwards omitted, Mason says, because Gray thought that it formed too long a parenthesis. He continued, however, to vacillate between discarding and retaining it, and it can hardly be regarded as cancelled : —

There scatter'd oft, the Earliest of the Year,
By Hand unseen are Showers of Violets found ;
The Reddest love to bask and warble there,
And little Footsteps lightly print the Ground."

(Gosse.)

119. Cf. Horace, *Odes*, iv., 3 :

Quem tu, Melpomene, sacris
Nascentem placet lumine videris.

science. Knowledge in the wide sense ; cf. *Ode on Eton College*, 3, and note thereon.

121. **soul.** In the Mason MS. "Heart."

123. The pointing of the original MSS., and of the editions published in Gray's lifetime is :—

He gave to Misery all he had, a tear

which is evidently preferable to the unauthorized punctuation adopted by Palgrave.

125. This stanza read originally :—

No farther seek his Merits to disclose
Nor seek to draw them from their dread Abode,
(His Frailties there in trembling Hope repose)
The Bosom of his Father and his God.

with "think" written above "seek" in the 2nd line.

126. **draw** is an infinitive.

Mr. Gosse says : "It is difficult to see by what figure a man's merits and his frailties can be said to repose on the bosom of God."

127. Gray himself cites Petrarch, Sonnet 114 : "paventosa speme." So Lucan, *Pharsalia*, vii., 297, has "Spe trepido."

ODE ON THE PLEASURE ARISING FROM VICISSITUDE.

"This ode was left unfinished by Gray ; it was first published by Mason in his *Memoirs* of Gray, 1775 ; and he 'had the boldness to attempt to finish it himself, making use of some other lines and broken stanzas which Gray had written'. . . . Gray wrote what we have of this ode probably in the winter of 1754-55. In a letter to Dr. Wharton dated 9th March, 1755, he speaks of his objection to publishing the ode on the *Progress of Poesy* alone ; and adds :— 'I have two or three ideas more in my head : ' 'One of these,' says Mason, 'was unquestionably this ode,—since I found in his memorandum book, of 1754, a sketch of his design as follows :—Contrast between the winter past and coming spring.—Joy owing to that vicissitude.—Many that never feel that delight.—Sloth.—Envy.—Ambition.—How much happier the rustie that feels it, though he knows not how.' " (Bradshaw.)

Palgrave's version printed in the text contains only the completed stanzas ; the omitted portions will be given in their proper places in the notes.

"I have heard Gray say, that Gresset's *Épître à ma Sœur* gave him the first idea of this ode ; and whoever compares it with the French poem will find some slight traits of resemblance." (Mason.) "But," says Gosse, "it was only a few commonplaces which the English poet borrowed from the French one, who might, indeed, remind him that—

Mille spectacles, qu'autrefois
On voyait avec nonchalance,
Transportent aujourd'hui présentant des appas
In connus à l'indifférence—

but was quite incapable of Gray's music and contemplative felicities."

1. Cf. Milton, *Comus*, 542 : "Knot-grass dew-besprent."

3. **vermeil**. "Deep-red," a poetic term employed by Spenser, Milton, etc. Cf. *Comus*, 752 : "vermeil-tinctured lips."

9-10. Cf. Lucretius, *De Nat.* i., 259 :

Hinc nova proles
Artubus infirmis teneras lasciva per herbas
Ludit.

16. **liquid light**. The phrase occurs in *Par. Lost*, vii., 362 ; see, also, *Ode on the Spring*, l. 27 and note thereon.

At this point in the existing MS. of this poem follow four lines of an incomplete stanza, which have been omitted by Palgrave :

Rise my soul ! on wings of fire,
Rise the rapturous choir among ;
Hark ! 'tis Nature strikes the lyre,
And leads the general song.

17. sullen year. Sullen, according to Skeat, comes ultimately from the Lat. "solus"; hence originally would mean "solitary," then "morose," "gloomy." Cf. Milton, *Sonnet* xx.: "help waste a sullen day."

22. Pay no regard to past or future.

23-24.

Sure he that made us with such large discourse
Looking before and after.

Hamlet, iv., 4.

So Shelley, in his *Ode to a Skylark*, notes as one cause of the less complete joy of man that—

We look before and after
And pine for what is not.

25-28. When we look back on past misfortunes, we can see an element of happiness in them, which lends to them a certain charm.

30. deepest shades is the object of "gilds" (l. 32).

38. Chastised. "Chastened" is the more ordinary form to express this sense.

We find in Pope, *Odyssey*, xvi., 196: "Then with surprise (surprise chastis'd by fears)," and in Thomson: "The gay social scene, By decency chastised"; in both these cases "chastised" means "moderated"; but in the case before us this sense is not consistent with the previous line, and "chastised" means 'purified and intensified by opposition.'

41. In this stanza Gray approaches Gresset most closely; compare the following lines from the latter:

O ! jours de la convalescence,
Jours d'une pure volupté
C'est une nouvelle naissance,
Un rayon d'immortalité.
Quel feu ! tous les plaisirs ont volé dans mon âme
J'adore avec transport le céleste flambeau,
Tout m'intéresse, tout m'enflâme—
Pour moi, l'univers est nouveau.

.

Les plus simples objets ; le chant d'une Fauvette,
 Le matin d'un beau jour, la verdure des bois
 La fraîcheur d'une violette ;
 Mille spectacles, qu'autrefois
 On voyoit avec nonchalance
 Transportent aujourd'hui, présentent des appas
 Inconnus à l'indifférence,
 Et que la foule ne voit pas.

45, fol. Nowhere in his poetry does Gray more completely escape from the artificial diction of the 18th century to the simplicity and directness of the later poetic style, than in these lines. As Mr. Gosse says, they might almost be Wordsworth's ; and perhaps they may have suggested to Wordsworth the familiar couplet from the *Immortality Ode* :

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

48. Here follow, in Gray's MS., some fragmentary lines :

Humble quiet builds her cell
 Near the source where Pleasure flows ;
 She eyes the clear crystalline well,
 And tastes it as it goes.
 Far below, the crowd.
 Where broad and turbulent it grows
 with resistless sweep
 They perish in the boundless deep.
 Mark where Indolence and Pride,
 Softly rolling side by side
 Their dull but daily round.

COWPER.

WILLIAM COWPER * came of gentle lineage on both paternal and maternal side. The Cowpers belonged to the Whig gentry; the poet's grandfather was a Judge of the Common Pleas, his great uncle was Lord Chancellor in the reign of Anne and George I. His mother was a Donne, a family that had already produced a distinguished poet, and traced itself back to royal ancestry. William Cowper was born November 26th, 1731, in the town of Great Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire, where his father was rector of the parish. When he was only six years old his mother died, and the little fellow, whose nature was unusually tender and sensitive, was presently sent to a private boarding-school, where his life was rendered miserable by the brutalities of one of the older boys. In 1741 he entered Westminster, one of the great English public schools, and seems to have led there a sufficiently happy life. He excelled at cricket and other games, and made good progress in his classical studies. Already in these boyish days his literary taste was sufficiently developed to enable him to enjoy Homer and Milton. The latter remained always his favourite among the English poets. When eighteen years of age, he was apprenticed to a London solicitor. In the choice of a profession he seems to have been entirely passive, yielding to the wishes of his father; and he made no serious attempt to fit himself for the practice of law. The next fourteen years of his life, from his eighteenth to his thirty-second year,—the important period in which a man's character and the possibilities of his life are, as a rule, finally determined—seem in Cowper's case to have been trifled away in a very purposeless, though doubtless harmless and innocent, fashion. During the three years of his apprenticeship, more hours seem to have been spent in amusing himself under the roof of his uncle, Ashley Cowper, than in work at the office. At his uncle's the poet enjoyed the society of two merry cousins of about his own age, Harriet (subsequently Lady Hesketh) and Theodora, and was "constantly employed from morning to night," as he himself tells us, "in giggling and making giggle." He and Theodora fell in love; but his uncle, observing, perhaps, that Cowper was never likely to make his way in the world, broke off the engagement. Cowper's lack of passion and easy temperament showed themselves in his acceptance of this conclusion to his love affair, and in his speedy recovery of equanimity. Through the death of his

* The name is pronounced *Cowper*.

father he inherited a little money, took chambers in the Temple, and set up as a barrister, but seems never to have had any practice. The days passed pleasantly and carelessly. He was on terms of intimacy with a band of old Westminster boys, now lively men-about-town with literary aspirations. To one of the periodicals of the day, *The Connoisseur*, he contributed two or three little essays in the manner of Addison's *Spectator*. Meanwhile his meagre patrimony was fast being spent, and he was making no strenuous effort to gain a livelihood or find serious employment for his energies. One cannot but feel that all this in the case of a young man of good principles, good intentions, and blameless life, points to some peculiar defect in character—a capacity for finding sufficient interest in the trivial events of each day without considering the future, a lack in the sense of responsibility, in practical force, and in the power of initiative. As a partial explanation it may be urged that in all probability he looked forward to being provided, through his influential relatives, with some post in the government employ. A small office of this kind, that of Commissioner of Bankrupts, which brought him £60 a year, he did obtain about 1759. In 1763 a much more lucrative position, that of Clerk of the Journals of the House of Lords, was bestowed upon him through his kinsman, Major Cowper. Cowper selected this in preference to another post which carried a larger salary, because the clerkship did not involve any duties requiring his appearance in public—a thing from which his sensitive and shy nature shrunk. Unfortunately there was some opposition to the appointment, and Cowper was ordered to appear at the bar of the House, and submit himself to examination in regard to his fitness for the duties which he had undertaken.

“A thunderbolt,” he writes, in an autobiographic sketch, “would have been as welcome to me as this intelligence. I knew to a demonstration that upon these terms the clerkship of the journals was no place for me. To require my attendance at the bar of the House, that I might there publicly entitle myself to the office, was, in effect, to exclude me from it. In the meantime, the interest of my friend, the honour of his choice, my own reputation and circumstances, all urged me forward, all pressed me to undertake that which I saw to be impracticable. They whose spirits are formed like mine, to whom a public exhibition of themselves on any occasion is mortal poison, may have some idea of the situation; others can have none.”

Notwithstanding the light-heartedness of his normal mood, there was a constitutional predisposition in Cowper to fits of intense depression. He had already in his twenty-first year experienced an attack of deep melancholy; the present crisis induced another of a much more serious character. As the time for the examination approached, his perturbation of spirits grew unbearable, and he attempted suicide. His

friends immediately relieved him from the terrible burden of the appointment, but the relief came too late ; his dejection only took a new form, he imagined that he had committed the unpardonable sin and was eternally lost. It was not long before he became completely insane. In December, 1763, he was sent to a private mad-house at St. Albans, where judicious treatment and religious consolation exercised a restorative effect on the invalid ; Cowper remained an inmate, however, for twelve months after his recovery, and did not leave the asylum until June, 1765.

There seems now to have been a general consensus of opinion among those interested in Cowper, that he was quite unfitted for the active duties of life and for making his way in the busy world. His relations clubbed together to furnish him with an allowance which, in addition to a small amount of money that was his own, might support him in comfort. Cowper himself seems to have acquiesced in their views, and to have accepted their gratuity with a complacency which would astonish us in another man. He took up his residence in the quiet town of Huntingdon, which was selected as being near Cambridge, where his nearest relative, his brother John, was a Fellow. The income provided was sufficient with judicious management ; Cowper was, however, anything but a man of affairs, he presently found himself in debt ; and no wonder, for he indulged in the luxury of a male attendant, and supported a poor boy in whom he had become interested. His debts, however, did not worry him ; he calmly paid them out of his little capital. The two years that he spent in Huntingdon were years of peace, even of intense felicity. There was the delight of mental convalescence, of repose and calm after the storms of madness. There was, above all, a spiritual exaltation, a sense of reconciliation to his Maker which filled his whole soul with joy and thankfulness. He had come under the influence of the Evangelical movement, then at its very height in England ; with the disappearance of insanity, had experienced conversion, and had accepted the doctrines of original depravity, grace, and so forth, which were usually adopted by this religious school. It was characteristic of the Evangelicals to bring religion into prominence in all the concerns of life, and, at that time when their enthusiasm was at its height, even to belittle and regard with contempt anything which did not in the most direct fashion contribute to the religious life. From this time forth, accordingly, religious interests are always in the foreground of Cowper's life and thought. At Huntingdon he was fortunate in forming an intimacy with a family which sympathized to the full with

his serious convictions. The family in question consisted of the Rev. Morley Unwin, who was a clergyman of the Church of England, somewhat advanced in years, Mrs. Unwin, who was much younger than her husband, being now about forty years old, a son, and a daughter. It was through the son, William, a young man of twenty, about to enter the church, that the acquaintance began; and to him through life Cowper was bound by the terms of the warmest friendship. But it was Mrs. Unwin (the "Mary" of the poems) to whom Cowper was especially drawn. In a letter written soon after the beginning of the friendship, he says of her :

"That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better for her company. I am treated in the family as if I were a near relation, and have been repeatedly invited to call upon them at all times. You know what a shy fellow I am; I cannot prevail with myself to make so much use of this privilege as I am sure they intend I should, but perhaps this awkwardness will wear off hereafter. It was my earnest request before I left St. Albans, that wherever it might please Providence to dispose of me, I might meet with such an acquaintance as I find in Mrs. Unwin."

To Cowper's tender and sensitive nature the tactful and sympathetic friendship of women was almost a necessity, and there was some winningness in his own character which made it easy for him to gain it. Presently the Unwins received him into their household, nominally as a boarder, but from the beginning he was treated as one of the family. Their daily life he describes in a letter to his cousin Harriet (now, by marriage, Lady Hesketh) :

"We breakfast commonly between eight and nine; till eleven we read either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries; at eleven we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day; and from twelve to three we separate, and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner; but, if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where, with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's collection; and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord, make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read and converse, as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon, and last of all the family are called to prayers. I need not tell *you* that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness; accordingly we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something very like a filial one for her; and her son and I are brothers."

This peaceful life was interrupted by the sudden death of the Rev. Morley Unwin in the summer of 1767. "The effect of [this event] upon

my circumstances," writes Cowper, "will only be a change of a place of abode. For I shall still, by God's leave, continue with Mrs. Unwin, whose behaviour to me has always been that of a mother to a son." The place of abode selected was the little town of Olney, in Buckinghamshire, on the sluggish river Ouse. The neighbourhood is by no means remarkable for its beauty; indeed, the scenery is tame, but possesses that quiet charm which is perhaps the most characteristic quality of English landscape. It was not considerations of scenery that drew Cowper and Mrs. Unwin thither, but the presence as curate there of the Rev. John Newton, one of the leaders in the Evangelical movement,—a man of great piety, and of strong and somewhat domineering personality. Apart from spiritual attractions there was little to commend Olney. The only house which they could find was uninviting and unwholesome; the town was dull, inhabited by lace-makers who with the utmost exertion were scarcely able to make a livelihood. Here, however, Cowper, Mrs. Unwin, and her daughter settled; the son had already gone out into the world, the daughter married in 1774. The new-comers mingled scarcely at all in general society; with Newton, on the other hand, they were in constant intercourse; Cowper's weaker nature fell completely under his sway, and the life of the little household was regulated by his will. Cowper's time was spent in a round of religious duties, church-services, visiting the poor, etc.; he even conducted prayer-meetings, notwithstanding his intense dislike of publicity. His letters to his relations and other friends become infrequent, almost exclusively religious in their tone and somewhat morbid. The narrowing of his interests, the strain put on his emotions by some, at least, of these occupations, the constant practice of spiritual introspection began to have a not unnatural effect upon a man of Cowper's peculiar constitution. In 1771, Mr. Newton became alarmed at the growing melancholy of his friend; and, to distract him, suggested that they should write in concert a volume of hymns. Cowper, who as far back as his engagement to Theodora had amused himself and his friends with the composition of verses, entered readily into Newton's scheme. The poet's share was written mainly during the years 1771-2, although the volume, entitled *Olney Hymns*, was not published until 1779. Several of his contributions have had a wide popularity, such as the hymn beginning, "God moves in a mysterious way," and "Oh for a closer walk with God." This employment did not, however, dissipate the increasing gloom.

In January 1773, he again became insane. All the care of Mrs.

Unwin and Newton was for a long time of little avail; and when, after the lapse of more than a year, convalescence did set in, its progress was extremely slow. His emergence from utter dejection was shown at first by an interest in various trifles,—gardening, carpentering, and the care of animals. In 1776 he resumed reading, and reopened correspondence with friends. The recovery was not, however, complete. After the year 1772 the poet was haunted by the belief that God had cast him off in this life, and had condemned him to everlasting torments in the next. The words “*Actum est de te, periisti*” (‘It is all over with thee, thou hast perished’) echoed in his ears. From this monomania he was never, during the remainder of his life, free, except for one or two short intervals of a few hours or days; yet what, to the outsider, seems the brightest period of his existence, what was certainly the busiest and most productive, now begins. Cowper, almost fifty years old, at length finds his sphere in life, renews old, and forms many new, friendships, writes the greater number of his charming letters—the best letters in English literature,—discovers serious and suitable employment for his energies in the production of poetry, and becomes a famous man. It is probable, then,—the tone of the greater part of his correspondence seems to show it,—that for some hours at least of most days from 1778 to 1793, he managed to forget his miseries, and to experience comparative happiness. The human mind has marvellous power of accommodating itself to the permanent presence of unavoidable evil; Cowper had always shown the faculty of absorption in passing events, and his mind was probably endowed with more than usual elasticity. Yet, in the background of his consciousness lay an abyss of gloom, to which his thoughts inevitably reverted when otherwise unengaged. It was needful, therefore, that some occupation should be found which should employ the mind, without overstraining it. It fortunately occurred to Mrs. Unwin then that the invalid might find salutary distraction in the writing of something longer and more ambitious than the occasional copies of verse with which he had sometimes amused himself hitherto. She suggested as a subject the Progress of Error. Cowper eagerly embraced the idea, and from the latter part of 1780 to the following autumn, wrote a series of pieces of a moral and didactic character, which were published along with some minor poems in February 1782. The volume, though it made no great noise in the world, was not altogether unsuccessful; the author’s immediate circle was pleased; it received the commendations of the great Franklin. A new and stimulating interest was added to Cowper’s life. It was, perhaps, fortunate that about this time, in January 1780 namely,

Newton resigned his curacy at Olney, and went to London. His strong personality dominated Cowper, and checked his spontaneous impulses. We certainly note, at this time, an expansion in the poet; he became more a creature of this present world, the current of his life was taking a more natural course; for one can easily see that while Cowper's nature was at bottom serious, he had an inborn aptitude for the lighter side of things. This change was assisted, and his daily life brightened, by a new acquaintance, Lady Austen. Lady Austen, a widow, at this time visiting a sister near Olney, was a woman who had seen a good deal of society; she was clever, vivacious and full of sensibility. "She laughs," writes Cowper in a letter to a friend, "and makes laugh; and keeps up a conversation without seeming to labour at it." To Mr. Unwin he writes: "She is a most agreeable woman, and has fallen in love with your mother and me; inasmuch, that I do not know but she may settle at Olney." She did take a house at Olney, close to that inhabited by Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, and for a time revolutionized their quiet existence. Cowper writes: "From a scene of the most uninterrupted retirement we have passed at once into a state of constant enjoyment. Not that our society is much multiplied; the addition of an individual has made all the difference. Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately at each other's chateau. In the morning I walk with one or other of the ladies, and in the evening wind thread. Thus did Hercules, and thus probably did Sampson, and thus do I; and, were both these heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial in that business, or doubt to beat them both." She could sing and play on the harpsichord, and the poet wrote songs for her, *e.g.*, the well-known "Toll for the Brave." It was she who told the story that took poetic form as *John Gilpin*. This was printed anonymously in the *Public Advertiser*, in November 1782, pleased the public immensely, and was reprinted again and again. It was Lady Austen, also, that inspired Cowper's greatest effort, *The Task*, which was published June 1785, and immediately won for its author the highest rank among living poets. The poet had included *John Gilpin* in the volume, and this must certainly have aroused curiosity in regard to *The Task*, and helped the more serious poem to make its way into public notice.

Before the completion of *The Task*, there was a breach between Cowper and Mrs. Unwin on the one side, and Lady Austen on the other, and Lady Austen drops out of Cowper's life. This great loss was in some measure made good by other friendships. By far the most important of these was that of his favourite cousin Lady

Hesketh, who had now been a widow for seven years. It was some twenty years since she had ceased corresponding with Cowper, repelled by his increasing narrowness and his peculiar religious views. But the reading of *The Task* and especially of *John Gilpin* brought vividly to her mind the cousin in whose company so many happy hours had been spent in her father's home. Lady Hesketh's proposition for a renewal of their intimacy gave Cowper intense pleasure. "This is just as it should be," he writes to her in reply. "We are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more are actually returned." In her second letter Lady Hesketh inquired as to the state of his finances, and offered him assistance. Cowper replies :

"Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney we have had but one purse, although during the whole time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues, indeed, are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own ; the worst consequence of this is that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life, nor the well-being of life, depend upon. . . . Now my beloved cousin you are in possession of the whole case as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it, but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life one of the sweetest that I can enjoy—a token and proof of your affection."

In the summer of 1786, Lady Hesketh took up her temporary residence in Olney, to the great delight of Cowper. Under her judicious management he was induced to come somewhat out of his shell, and to enter into social relations with the gentry of the neighbourhood. He had himself a little earlier fallen into an intimacy with the Throckmortons—a neighbouring landed proprietor and his wife—an intimacy which added much to his happiness. Lady Hesketh brought about another important change : Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, in November 1786, removed from the house in which they had lived during nineteen years to a much more attractive and suitable one in the pretty little village of Weston, two miles from Olney, where they were in the immediate neighbourhood of the Throckmortons.

Since the completion of *The Task*, Cowper had been engaged on a translation of Homer into blank verse. It went to the press in 1791, was published by subscription, and brought to the poet more than £1,000 ; but it cannot be regarded as one of his successful achievements, possessing, by universal admission, at least one fatal defect ; it is dull.

Meanwhile, all was not going well with the poet. In November, 1786, a sad affliction befell Mrs. Unwin and Cowper in the death of her son, the Rev. William Unwin. This was doubtless a potent factor

in the production of the poet's fourth attack of insanity, which came on in January, 1787, and lasted until June. By the autumn, however, he had regained his normal condition, and resumed his correspondence. One letter, written about this time, may be quoted here as an example of his skill in this species of literature, as well as of the exquisite humour and drollery which shows itself repeatedly both in his prose and poetry, and is one of the chief attractions of both :

"On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and being desired to sit, spoke as follows: 'Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All-Saints, in Northampton; brother of Mr. Cox the upholsterer. It is customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You would do me a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me with one.' To this I replied, 'Mr. Cox, you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, Cox the statuary, who, every body knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose.' 'Alas! Sir, I have heretofore borrowed help from him; but he is a gentleman of so much reading, that the people of our town cannot understand him.' I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer. Perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too for the same reason. But on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my Muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying the poor man's distress, which appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The wagon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary style. A fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one*, that serves *two hundred* persons."

In December, 1791, Mrs. Unwin had an attack of paralysis; a partial recovery followed, and in August of the following year, she and Cowper made a visit of some weeks to the country-seat of William Hayley, a recent but warm friend of the poet. For twenty-six years Cowper had scarcely stirred from his own immediate neighbourhood, and to him this journey was a most formidable undertaking. "Could you have any conception," he wrote to Hayley, "of the fears I have had to bustle with, of the dejection of spirits I have suffered concerning this journey, you would wonder much more that I still courageously persevere in my resolution to undertake it." These weeks spent with Hayley in Sussex, though marred somewhat by homesickness, were among the last happy weeks of Cowper's life. Presently Mrs. Unwin grew worse, sank into a physical helplessness and mental childishness. The relations between Cowper and her were now reversed. She who had carefully tended him in health and sickness, and warded off from him so many ills and annoyances, became a constant charge upon her companion—a charge

which his nerves and physical strength could not endure; the clouds of mental gloom gathered thicker than ever, and this time never to break again. The record of his latest years, from 1793 to his death, is too sad to dwell upon. The one pleasing feature is the way in which friends gathered round him in his need; near relatives he had none; yet no man could have had more attentive care than the poor invalid. Lady Hesketh's own failing health necessitated her absence, but a relative on Cowper's mother's side, the Rev. John Johnson, took charge of the sufferers and did all for them that lay within human power. Hoping that change of scene might be of avail, Mr. Johnson, in July 1795, carried Cowper and Mrs. Unwin to Norfolk, where was his own home. Cowper, in deep dejection, turned his back upon the long-loved and familiar places, which, he felt, he should never see again. Before the close of the year Mrs. Unwin died; and so overwhelming was the gloomy listlessness of the poet that he scarcely noted the event. He occasionally worked at revising his Homer, and translated some short pieces. In 1799 he wrote his last original poem, *The Castaway*, and died April 25th, 1800.

General Characteristics.

Cowper is not a poet likely to attract readers whose tastes have been formed by the latest developments in English verse. His style will seem tame and colourless in comparison with the most recent popular poetry. Yet, even granting that these latest developments possess higher worth, it is a pity that we should be content to enjoy only that which we can with very little effort appreciate, and to neglect all excellence that is not of the most recent mode. Cowper particularly deserves our study because he possesses qualities of simplicity and directness which are apt to be little cultivated or appreciated in our day. It may at once be admitted, however, that he is not a poet of the highest order, and that his historical position in the development of poetry has given to his writings a prominence which their absolute merits do not deserve. He is the first English poet whose work, through the absence of certain qualities and through the presence of others, severs itself unmistakably from the traditions and standards of the 18th century, and finds its affinities with the productions of a later time. These qualities are most manifest in *The Task*; which is, besides, Cowper's most ambitious effort, and the single poem which most adequately

represents his characteristics. But it is probable that his most perfect and permanent work is contained in his minor pieces, of which some examples are given in these *Selections*. In these pieces there is great variety; the treatment varies from gay to grave in accordance with the theme,—from the broad playfulness of *John Gilpin*, through the delicate humour of *The Yearly Distress*, the felicitous narrative of *The Retired Cat*, or, *The Dog and the Waterlily*, the noble seriousness and simplicity of *The Loss of the Royal George*, the tender pathos of *The Poplar Field*, or of the lines *On My Mother's Picture*, and the profoundly tragic note of *The Castaway*. All these pieces have perfect simplicity, an admirable fitness of expression, an exquisite good taste and self-restraint—no needless ornament, no affectation, no over-elaboration, no roughness. Admirable as are the more serious of these minor pieces, they are not the most distinctive productions of his genius. It is in the perfect grace, charm, and, often, humour with which he treats trivial themes—principally taken from his own uneventful experience—that he chiefly excels. Cowper does not, like some other poets (Wordsworth and Browning for example) give worth to the commonplace by opening our eyes to some deeper significance that underlies its superficial triviality; with him the excellence of the poem does not arise from the penetrating vision of the seer, but from the deftness of the artistic workman; not from the profundity of the thought, but from the aptness of the embodiment. The same qualities which make him the best letter-writer in English literature, give him success in these unambitious poems.

The most typical sort of letter—the friendly letter—deals necessarily with what is but of slight import in itself, and the skilful letter-writer makes this interesting by his treatment. What is lacking in weight of substance is supplied by charm of expression; yet for the attaining of that charm the more elaborate devices of literature are not available: for they are fatal to that unstudied naturalness which should characterize a letter. The style must charm, but it must also be simple and direct. Again, the writer must imbue what he says with his own personality; in that way alone does his correspondent attain to the feeling of personal intercourse for which the friendly letter is the substitute. And, further, if the world at large is, by and by, to enjoy these letters, there must be some charm in the personality so revealed. All these peculiarities belong both to Cowper's letters and to his minor poems, and are the outcome of the character of the man and the conditions of his life as revealed in his biography. The sensitiveness, genuine kindness of heart, true gentility and courtesy of the

man correspond to the tact, simplicity, and good taste of his letters and minor poems. In his lifetime, — notwithstanding the limitations of his knowledge and experience, the narrowing effects of some of the religious influences under which he came, the contemptuous pity which his practical helplessness would naturally arouse, — he exercised a fascination over people as different as Newton, Lady Austen, Hill, Hayley, the Unwins and the Throckmortons. There was some exceptional charm which enabled the poor invalid to gather friends about him in every time of need, and to become the object of such devotion and self sacrifice. It is this same charm of his personality, felt during his life by those with whom he came in contact, that is still potent over the reader of his letters and poems.

Another condition may be noted as favourable to Cowper's peculiar literary excellence—the leisure of his life, the absence of serious employments and exacting interests. If literary biography shows anything, it shows that a writer's true themes are those with which he is, by predisposition and circumstances, thoroughly acquainted, in which his interest naturally centres. It was not by an effort, or for literary purposes, that Cowper forced his attention upon his garden, or his hares, or the incidents of his daily walks, as would have been the case with most men normally situated. These were the salient points in Cowper's quiet life; it was upon these his mind naturally dwelt, especially after his insanity had made it needful that he should avert his mind from religious topics. The narrowness of his experience and observation enabled him to concentrate his interest, and to know all the more thoroughly what he did know. So, for example, had he been familiar with the Lake country, the Highlands, Switzerland, Italy, it is scarcely likely that he could have reproduced the tame scenery of Olney with such fidelity and effect. Nor did he need to grudge the time and care that he gave to these trifling pieces; for employment itself was an object. He was accustomed to polish and finish with the utmost nicety. At the same time, through the perfect simplicity of his nature, his innate repugnance to display and affectation, he did not spoil his letters or his poems by conscious artifice such as we find in the many writers of the present day who have discovered that the trivial and local is valuable literary capital, and who proceed to make the most they can out of it. Cowper's efforts were not directed towards amplification and ornament, but towards grace and simplicity.

Of course all this is not enough to make Cowper's work what it is—these were simply favouring conditions, and contributing causes. At bottom we always come to that inexplicable thing called genius. Cowper's genius did not lie in the profundity and novelty of his thought. It is the distinctively literary gift that he possesses,—that of direct and true observation, and the power of registering the results of this observation in appropriate and charming expression. In addition, he had humour and he had pathos. "Of the lyrical depth and passion of the great Revolution poets," says Mr. Goldwin Smith, "Cowper is wholly devoid. His soul was stirred by no movement so mighty, if it were even capable of the impulse. Tenderness he has, and pathos as well as playfulness; he has unfailing grace and ease; he has clearness like that of a trout-stream."

But apart from the absolute excellence of his work, Cowper has an historical importance due to the fact that he is the first poet to disregard the traditions of the so-called classical school, the school of Pope—and to give expression to poetic tendencies which were destined to revolutionize English poetry. "To turn from a poem of Cowper's," says Mr. Ward, "to a poem of Pope's, or even of Goldsmith's, is to turn from one sphere of art to quite another, from unconscious to conscious art. 'Formal gardens in comparison with woodland scenery,' as Southey said, and how much that means! It means that the day of critical and so-called classical poetry is over; that the day of spontaneous, natural, romantic poetry has begun. Burns and Wordsworth are not yet, but they are close at hand." It seems odd that this gentle, shrinking spirit should have been the first to raise the standard of revolt; but, in truth, he did it unconsciously; and those very limitations which, we might suppose, would incapacitate him for any such role in literature, were actually conditions which assisted him in discharging it. In a remarkable degree Cowper escaped from those influences which impress upon a writer the fashions of his day. For twenty years before the appearance of his first volume of poems he was almost completely isolated from the world of letters, not only by his residence in secluded Olney, but also by the nature of his reading. He was neither a systematic nor a wide reader. He read aloud in the evenings to Mrs. Unwin such books as might come into his hands. In the earlier years at Olney these were probably mainly religious; by and by when the nature of his monomania would lead him to avoid such works, we know that he had a preference for books of travel. As for books that would affect his poetic style, he scarcely read any. He says, in a letter writ-

ten in 1781, "I have not read an English poet these thirteen years, and but one these twenty years." Of contemporary poetry, he was therefore almost totally ignorant, and even his relation to the poetry of the past was such as to minimize its effect. His early classical reading doubtless served to form his taste and fix literary standards in his mind, but the influence upon his own production would be of a general and broad character. There was none of that daily converse with great literature which imbued the mind of Gray, to such an extent that he could scarcely take up his pen without exhibiting traces of its influence in phraseology, imagery, or ideas. Books were not very accessible at Olney, and the poet's library could not supply the lack. We know that in 1791 it consisted of twenty books, and Mr. Wright has shown that at the time of writing *The Task*, it probably did not number more than six. Milton's works were among them; and it is notable that Milton is the one author to whom evidently, in the blank verse of *The Task*, our poet is under direct obligations.

Further, desire for fame did not lead Cowper to accommodate his writing to what he might conceive to be the dominant literary taste. He was in a uniquely independent position, for his main motive in writing was to find occupation and to amuse himself. Did he think of an audience, it was naturally of his friends—Mrs. Unwin, Newton, etc.,—a very different audience from the hypercritical and learned circle which was nearest Gray. All these circumstances would tend to set him free from the pressure of current ideas and accepted models, and to allow anything of individuality which he might possess to have free play.

Again, the circumstances of the poet's life tended to lead him into the paths which were to be trodden by the poets of the coming century. In the longer pieces, however, of his first volume (1782), he is distinctly a follower of the old school. All these poems are upon themes of a general and abstract character; they all have a didactic aim; they are more or less satiric; they are written in heroic couplets. The only particular in which they strikingly differ from much that had been written before them, are that they represent the point of view of an adherent of the new Evangelical movement, and of one to whom country-life and retirement were more familiar and pleasing than the life of the city and of the great world. The character of these poems is easily indicated. *Expostulation* is a parallel between the history of Israel and Britain. Its fundamental conception is that God punishes widespread defection from moral and religious standards by national

disasters, and its object is to warn the English to repent, lest they may be overwhelmed by disaster as the Jewish nation was. *Truth* is a plea for Calvinistic doctrines and Evangelical practice. *Conversation* is a lighter and more readable poem, quite in the character of the 18th century; the proper rules for conversation are laid down, and satirical pictures of the different types of talkers are given, the coxcomb, the bashful man, etc.—pictures which have considerable vivacity and power. *Retirement* is the most attractive of these “moral satires”; and that, because singing as it does the praises of country life, it treats of a theme not unsuited to poetry, and one upon which the poet was well qualified by taste and experience to speak. But poems of this character could never have served to elevate their writer above the rank and file of Eighteenth century poets. He did not possess any very remarkable qualifications for a task requiring knowledge of men, and breadth of view, nor could he rival Pope’s facility and smartness in handling the heroic couplet.

It was in *The Task* that he, without set purpose to do so, deserted the old models, and introduced something of a really original and novel character into the world of literature. *The Task* still remains the best known of his works, and the most adequately representative of all sides of the writer’s genius. This poem belongs to the later poetic movement, rather than to the earlier in virtue, first of all, of its personal character, its bold individuality. The poet does not seek to adjust his sentiments and feelings to the taste of the supposed average man. *The Task* is a frank revelation of Cowper’s own tastes and feelings. He tells unaffectedly what interests him, and what he thinks, trusting that there are readers who will sympathize with him. “My descriptions,” he writes of *The Task*, “are all from nature;—not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience;—not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural.” The personality of the author is always in the foreground and gives to the poem the only unity of which it can boast. For it has no defined theme. Lady Austen, whom he asked to suggest a subject, replied, “Oh, you can write on anything—write upon this sofa,” and so the poet starts out with the sofa; but that rather barren subject is exhausted in the course of one hundred lines, and the poet proceeds to tell of the walks he took, the views he delighted in, the pursuits that he followed, his opinions, tastes, and feelings. The only unity such a miscellaneous collection of topics can have is the unity of tone and feeling given by the character of the writer.

The next two points of resemblance to later poetry are the nature of the theme—commonplace, rural, everyday life—and the realistic fashion in which this theme is treated. Cowper's life and interests naturally led him to write on these subjects,—of what else had he knowledge? What Wordsworth consciously advocated, Cowper unwittingly did—widened the sphere of poetry, broke down the barriers set up by the narrowness and false sense of dignity belonging to his age, and found in nature, and 'the incidents and situations of common life,'—more especially of 'rustic life,'—a theme for true poetry. And these things he painted with simple fidelity; so that scenes and characters are charged with that individuality and local colour which are so characteristic of our later literature. To get a clear conception of the freshness of *The Task*, it should be compared with Thomson's *Seasons*, a poem which it in many respects resembles. The landscapes of *The Task* reproduce particular views in the neighbourhood of Olney; but the landscape of *The Seasons* do not represent any definite locality; they are artificial compositions of details drawn from various scenes, or even from books, such as seemed appropriate to the poet's taste—not nature as it is, but nature in some degree conventionalized. Hence something of vagueness and unreality in these descriptions. Cowper, again, limits himself to scenes with which he is actually familiar; Thomson makes repeated excursions outside the sphere of his own observation, and gives a series of somewhat hackeneyed and general descriptions of the scenery, of the tropics, northern latitudes, etc. Cowper has faith in the interest of what is true and real; and so his portraits of persons,—his postman, his woodman, and other humble characters,—are extraordinarily realistic, quite unlike the fanciful swains and nymphs—Damon, and Melinda and Lavinia—of *The Seasons*. The vapid personifications, the allegorical personages, and heathen divinities are plentifully scattered through the pages of Thomson's poem, and give it an air of unreality altogether absent from *The Task*. Reality, sincerity, simplicity characterize *The Task* everywhere, except when the imitation of Milton's blank verse leads to inflated and pompous diction and lumbering movement. Cowper is, of course, no mere photographer; like every artist he has an eye for the salient and telling points. Note, for example, the judicious selection of details in each of the pictures contained in the following lines:—

The sheepfold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe
At first, progressive as a stream they seek
The middle field; but, scattered by degrees,

Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.
 There from the sun-burnt hay-field homeward creep
 The loaded wain ; while lightened of its charge
 The wain that meets it passes swiftly by ;
 The boorish driver leaning o'er his team
 Vociferous and impatient of delay.

Finally, in *The Seasons*, the poet effaces himself ; the poem is in the main impersonal : the reader is scarcely aware that he is seeing through the eyes of another. Thomson attains this by largely eliminating his own peculiarities ; he is a sort of ideal or abstract spectator who is interested and sees what the average reader would be interested in, and would see.

The novelties of *The Task* are the commonplaces of later literature ; but the poem had a wonderful freshness for its first readers, and as its novelties were in keeping with growing tendencies, it was unlike most original poems, popular from the first ; and, when its freshness had somewhat worn off, it continued to enjoy a wide favour among those numerous English-speaking men and women who sympathized with the poet's religious attitude.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY.—The latest life containing the most recent information is that by Thomas Wright (T. Fisher Unwin), the life by Southey (*Bohn's Library*), and the shorter sketch by Goldwin Smith (*English Men of Letters Series*) have more of interest and literary charm. The standard edition of Cowper's works is that edited by Southey in 8 vols. (*Bohn*), including the life above-mentioned and nearly all the published letters ; a good one vol. edition is that edited by Benham (Macmillan's *Globe Library*) ; a selection from the poetical works by Mrs. Oliphant (*Golden Treasury Series*), from the letters by Benham in the same series. A volume of annotated selections from the poems edited by Webb is contained in Macmillan's *English Classics* ; from the letters, in the same series ; *The Task* and select minor poems ed. Griffith in the *Clarendon Press Series*. Critical Essays, etc., by Walter Bagehot, by Mrs. Oliphant (*Literary History of England*), by Leslie Stephen (*Hours in a Library*), by T. H. Ward (*English Poets*), by Sainte Beuve (*Causeries du Lundi*, tome xi).

THE SHRUBBERY.

First published in the volume of 1782; after the title in the original edition are the words: "Written in a time of affliction." According to Benham this "affliction" was the approach of madness in 1773. The Shrubbery was at Weston, a narrow plantation threaded by a winding path. In its midst stood a rustic hut, which had on one side of it a weeping willow, and in front a beautiful sheet of water.

THE POPLAR FIELD.

First printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for January, 1785, and afterwards included in *Poems*, 1800. Cowper made a Latin translation of this poem, which may be found in his works.

In a letter to Lady Hesketh, May 1st, 1786, the poet writes: "There was, indeed, some time since, in a neighbouring parish called Lavendon, a field, one side of which formed a terrace, and the other was planted with poplars, at whose foot ran the Ouse, that I used to account a little paradise; but the poplars have been felled, and the scene has suffered so much by the loss, that though still in point of prospect beautiful, it has not charms sufficient to attract me now. A certain poet wrote a copy of verses on this melancholy occasion, which, though they have been printed, I dare say you never saw." The poplar field stood near Lavendon Mill, about a mile from Olney.

4. Ouse. The river, on which Olney stands, flows through Bedford, Huntingdon, Cambridge and Norfolk into the Wash.

5. Twelve years. Cowper moved to Olney in September, 1767; he became acquainted with this scene soon after his arrival; it seems likely then, that this poem was written five or six years before publication.

17. The reading of this stanza adopted by Palgrave is first found in the edition of 1803. Cowper's earlier version was:—

'Tis a sight to engage me, if anything can,
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man;
Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
Having a being less durable even than he.

TO MARY UNWIN.

This sonnet was first published in 1803; by Southey and subsequent editors it is dated May, 1793. But Mr. W. T. Webb, in his edition, argues for an earlier date (1st) because the tone of the poem is more appropriate to the period before Mrs. Unwin's paralytic seizure in 1791, (2nd) because in a letter of March 12th, 1790, Cowper refers to a poem to Mrs. Unwin, and to no other poem than this which exists would such reference be appropriate. In this letter, speaking of his lines *On Receipt of My Mother's Picture*, he styles it "a poem which, one excepted, I had more pleasure in writing than anything I ever wrote. That one was addressed to a lady whom I expect in a few minutes to come down to breakfast, and who has supplied to me the place of my own mother—my own invaluable mother, these six and twenty years."

Mr. Palgrave says in his note on this sonnet in his *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*: The Editor would venture to class in the very first rank this sonnet, which records Cowper's gratitude to the Lady whose affectionate care for many years gave what sweetness he could enjoy to a life radically wretched. Petrarch's sonnets have a more ethereal grace and a more perfect finish; Shakespeare's more passion; Milton's stand supreme in stateliness; Wordsworth's in depth and delicacy. But Cowper's mingles with an exquisiteness in the turn of thought which the ancients would have called Irony, an intensity of pathetic tenderness peculiar to his loving nature.—There is much mannerism, much that is unimportant, or of now exhausted interest in his poems: but where he is great, it is with that elementary greatness which rests on the most universal human feelings. Cowper is our highest master in simple pathos."

2. It was a commonplace with the poets to represent themselves as inspired by Apollo, the Muses, etc. See the opening passage of *Paradise Lost*.

5. **shed my wings.** Lose my poetic power; so Milton speaks in the passage referred to in last note, of his "adventurous song" "that with no middle flight intends to soar."

9. Cf. *Revelation* iii., 5: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment: and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life," and xx., 12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

TO THE SAME.

These lines *To Mary* were written in the autumn of 1793 and published in 1803. At the time when the poem was written Mrs. Unwin was in a condition of utter childishness and helplessness owing to paralysis, of which she had a first attack in 1791, and a second in Sept., 1792. She died in Dec., 1796.

1. This apparently refers to Cowper's attack of insanity in 1773, which, according to his friend Newton, prevented his intended marriage with Mrs. Unwin.

7. Cowper ascribes Mrs. Unwin's condition to the anxiety and care caused by his own mental attacks.

9. Lady Hesketh, writing to her sister in 1786, says of Mrs. Unwin: "Her constant employment is knitting stockings, which she does with the finest needles I ever saw, and very nice they are (the stockings, I mean). Our cousin has not for many years worn any other than those of her manufacture . . . She sits knitting on one side of the table in her spectacles, and he on the other reading to her (when he is not employed in writing) in *his*. In winter, his morning studies are always carried on in a room by himself; but as his evenings are spent in the winter in transcribing, he usually, I find, does this *vis-à-vis* Mrs. Unwin."

 THE CASTAWAY.

This poem is dated March 20th, 1799, and was first published in 1803. "It is," says Southey, "the last original piece that he composed, and, all circumstances considered, one of the most affecting that ever was composed." When he wrote it he had long been sunk in profound melancholy which was connected with an idea (always present in Cowper's mind during insanity) that his soul was finally lost. He recalled one incident which he had read some time before in Anson's *Voyages*, and found in the unhappy sailor's fate a parallel for his own eternal perdition. Mr. Webb notes that in 1773 he had applied to himself the title of the poem, "My sin and my judgment are alike peculiar. I am a castaway deserted and condemned." Cf. *I. Cor.* ix, 27: "lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

3. **such a destined wretch.** One, like myself, destined to destruction.

8. **he.** George, Lord Anson (1697-1767). In 1739 he was despatched in command of a squadron of six vessels to harass Spanish commerce and colonies. Though his ships were badly equipped, he won a splendid reputation in this expedition, not only by his *successes*, but by his heroism and humanity, and by the contributions which his voyage made to knowledge of navigation and geography. He returned to England in 1744, having occupied three years and nine months in circumnavigating the globe.

11. **He loved**, etc. The nameless hero of the story loved both his leader and his country.

18. Webb compares *Par. Lost*, i., 191 :

What reinforcement we may gain from hope,
If not, what resolution from despair.

49-50. the page **Of narrative sincere.** Anson's *Voyage Round the World* (published 1748).

TENNYSON.

IN his lifetime, Tennyson manifested an intense repugnance to the practice of making the character and personal concerns of distinguished writers public property. He himself took every measure to escape notoriety of this kind, and gave scant encouragement to collectors of biographical material. Notwithstanding, it was inevitable that many anecdotes should become current concerning him, and that many persons, with more or less knowledge, should write impressions and report interviews. As yet, however, there is but little sure ground for forming a conception of the man apart from his published works, and in view of this and the fact that an authorized biography will shortly appear, the present sketch is limited to a statement of some of the main external facts connected with the poet's career.

ALFRED TENNYSON was the third son of the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, rector of Somersby, a small village in Lincolnshire not far from the sea-coast. Though in the neighbourhood of the fen country, Somersby itself lies "in a pretty pastoral district of sloping hills and large ash trees." "To the north rises the long peak of the wold, with its steep white road that climbs the hill above Thetford; to the south, the land slopes gently to a small deep-channelled brook, which rises not far from Somersby and flows just below the parsonage garden." The scenery of his native village and its neighbourhood, where he spent his youth and early manhood,—the scenery of wold, and fen, and sandy coast—made a deep impress on the poet's mind, and is reflected again and again in his earlier writings. In the parsonage of Somersby, which was then the only considerable house in the little hamlet, Alfred was born August 6th, 1809. His father was a man of ability, with intellectual and artistic interests; books were at hand, and the three elder boys not only became great readers, but from childhood were accustomed to write original verses. The life of the Tennysons was a somewhat secluded one; Alfred was naturally shy, with a bent towards solitary and imaginative pursuits. These tendencies may have been fostered by the character of his early education. He was not sent to a great public school, like most English boys of his class, but attended the village school at Somersby, then the grammar school at the neighbouring town of Louth, and was finally prepared for entering college by home tuition. Already before he had become an undergraduate, he was an author, having, along with his elder brother Charles, written a volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*, which was published at Louth

in 1827 by a local bookseller. The work is creditable to such youthful poets (the poems contributed by Alfred were composed between his fifteenth and his seventeenth year), but more remarkable for the absence of marked immaturity than for the presence of positive merits. The breadth of the authors' reading is attested by quotations prefixed to the various pieces: Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, Terence, Lucretius, Sallust, Tacitus, Byron, Cowper, Gray, Hume, Moore, Scott, Beattie and Addison being all put under contribution.

In 1828 Charles and Alfred entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where the eldest brother, Frederick, was already a student. There the Tennysons were associated with some of the most brilliant and promising of their contemporaries. Alfred formed an especially warm friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam, a young man of extraordinary endowments, whose premature death he subsequently commemorated in *In Memoriam*. In 1829 Tennyson won the Chancellor's prize for English verse by a poem on "Timbuctoo," where for the first time in his work, there is some promise of future excellence, and some faint touches of his later style. Next year his poetic career may really be said to have begun with a small volume entitled *Poems Chiefly Lyric*, which in such poems as *Claribel*, *The Dying Swan*, *Mariana*, and *The Poet*, clearly exhibit some of his characteristic qualities. The volume was favourably reviewed by Leigh Hunt and Hallam, but severely criticized by "Christopher North" in *Blackwood*. In the same year the author embarked on a very different undertaking, going with Hallam to Spain in order to carry, to the revolutionists there, money and letters from English sympathizers. In 1831 his college career was brought to a close by the death of his father, and he returned to Somersby. Here he completed a second volume of poems, published in 1832. This marks another advance in poetic art, and contains some of his most characteristic pieces: *The Lady of Shalott*, *Oenone*, *The Palace of Art*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *The Two Voices*. It should be remembered, however, that several of these do not now appear in their original form, and that much of their perfection is due to revisions later than 1832. This volume was severely criticized as well as its predecessor, especially by the *Quarterly*. But although in this article justice was not done to the merits of the volume, the strictures upon defects were in the main well grounded, as the poet himself tacitly acknowledged by omitting or amending in subsequent editions what had been objected to. Another result of the hostility of the critics was that Tennyson, who was always morbidly sensitive to criticism even from the most friendly source,

ceased publishing for almost ten years, except that verses from his pen occasionally appeared in the pages of *Literary Annuals*. This ten-years silence is characteristic of the man, of his self-restraint and power of patient application—potent factors in the ultimate perfection of his work.

The sudden death of his friend Hallam, in September 1833, plunged Tennyson for a time in profound sorrow, but was doubtless effective in maturing and deepening his emotional and intellectual life. Of the years which followed, but little is known. He lived sometimes in London, sometimes in the country, and devoted himself wholly to a poetic career to the exclusion of any regular and remunerative profession. This he was enabled to do by the possession of an income from some source or other, scanty, indeed, but sufficing for actual necessities. His life at this time seems to have been on the whole, isolated, though he maintained an intimacy with a few friends, and gradually became personally known in the literary circles of London. Among other notable men he met with Carlyle, found pleasure in the company of this uncouth genius and his clever wife, and, in turn, was regarded with unusual favour by a keen-eyed and censorious pair of critics. Tennyson was one of the very few distinguished men whose personality impressed Carlyle favourably. The account which the latter gives of Tennyson in a letter to Emerson, dated August 1844, is worth quoting at length :—

“Moxon informs me that Tennyson is now in Town, and means to come and see me. Of this latter result I shall be very glad. Alfred is one of the few British and Foreign Figures (a not increasing number, I think!) who are and remain beautiful to me—a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, Brother! However, I doubt he will not come; he often skips me in these brief visits to Town; skips everybody, indeed; being a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom,—carrying a bit of chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into *Cosmos*. Alfred is the son of a Lincolnshire Gentleman Farmer, I think; indeed you see in his verses that he is a native of ‘moated granges,’ and green flat pastures, not of mountains and their torrents and storms. He had his breeding at Cambridge, as for the Law or Church; being master of a small annuity on his Father’s decease, he preferred clubbing with his Mother and some Sisters, to live unpromoted and write poems. In this way he lives still, now here, now there; the family always within reach of London, never in it; he himself making rare and brief visits, lodging in some old comrade’s rooms. I think he must be under forty—not much under it. One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusty-dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not meet, in these late decades, such company

over a pipe! We shall see what he will grow to. He is often unwell; very chaotic his way is through Chaos and the Bottomless and Endless; not handy for making out many miles upon."

Meanwhile, in 1842, two years before this letter was written, Tennyson gave conclusive evidence of the power that was in him, by the publication of two volumes containing, in the first place, a selection from the poems of 1830 and of 1842, and, secondly, a large number of new pieces. Among the latter are *Home at Arthur's Upside*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, *The Talking Oak*, *Locksley Hall*, *Dora*, *St. Simon Stylites*, *St. Agnes's Eve*, "Break, break, break," and the three poems "You ask me why," "Of old sat Freedom," "Love thou thy land." Such pieces as these represent the mature art of their author, and some of them he never surpassed. Their excellence was generally recognized; during his ten years of silence Tennyson's reputation had been steadily growing, the two volumes of 1842 set it upon a firm basis. From that day to this, he has held the first place in general estimation among contemporary poets. In 1845 Wordsworth pronounced him "decidedly the first of our living poets"; in the same year the fourth edition of the *Poems* of 1842 was called for, and the publisher, Moxon, said that Tennyson was the only poet by the publication of whose works he had not been a loser; finally, in the same year, the prime minister, Sir Robert Peel, through the intervention of Tennyson's old college friend Milnes (Lord Houghton), conferred upon him a pension of £200 a year. This was a timely relief to pecuniary difficulties which were at this date very embarrassing. *The Prince*, his next long work, was published in 1847. Through a fanciful story of a Princess who founded a university for women, it gave a poetical presentation and solution of the 'woman question'; but rather disappointed, at the time, the high expectations excited by the earlier writings. On the other hand, *In Memoriam*, which appeared in 1850 has from the beginning been considered one of the finest products of his genius. It consists of a series of lyrics giving utterance to various moods and thoughts to which the great sorrow of his youth had given birth. These had been carefully elaborated during a long period, are extraordinarily finished in their expression and are fuller of substance than any other of the more ambitious works of their author. No other poem so adequately represents the current thought and average attitude of Tennyson's generation in regard to many of the great problems of the time. In the year of the publication of *In Memoriam*, the laureateship, rendered vacant by the death of Wordsworth, was bestowed upon Tennyson. In the same year his marriage took place, and he with his wife made a

tour in Italy. In 1853 the Tennysons took up their residence at Farringford, in the Isle of Wight, which was henceforth their home, and the poet entered upon a period of sure and increasing popularity and growing worldly prosperity. He never relaxed, however, even in advanced old age, his strenuous poetic industry: hence a long series of works of a high order of merit, of which we will mention only the more important. In 1855, *Maud*, a lyrical monodrama, was published, about which critical opinion was then and still remains greatly divided, though the poet himself regarded it with special favour. In 1857, Bayard Taylor visited Tennyson at his home and records his impressions: "He is tall and broad-shouldered as a son of Anak, with hair, beard, and eyes of Southern darkness. Something in the lofty brow and aquiline nose suggests Dante, but such a deep, mellow chest-voice never could have come from Italian lungs. He proposed a walk, as the day was wonderfully clear and beautiful. We climbed the steep comb of the chalk cliff, and slowly wandered westward until we reached the Needles, at the extremity of the Island, and some three or four miles distant from his residence. During the conversation with which we beguiled the way, I was struck with the variety of his knowledge. Not a little flower on the downs, which the sheep had spared, escaped his notice, and the geology of the coast, both terrestrial and submarine, were perfectly familiar to him. I thought of a remark that I had once heard from the lips of a distinguished English author [Thackeray] that Tennyson was the wisest man he knew."

Tennyson, as such poems as *The Lady of Shalott* and *Morte d'Arthur* show, had been early attracted by the legendary tales of King Arthur, which to several poets had seemed a rich storehouse of poetical material. About the year 1857 he began to occupy himself specially with these legends; and from this time on until the middle seventies his chief energy was given to the composition of a series of poems from these sources, which were ultimately arranged to form a composite whole, entitled the *Idylls of the King*.

In 1875 he entered on a new field with the publication of an historical drama, *Queen Mary*, followed in 1876 by a similar work, *Harold*, and by other dramatic pieces in later years. In the drama Tennyson was less successful than in any other department which he attempted, and this lack of success gave rise to a widespread feeling that his powers were now in decline. Such a conclusion was most decisively negatived by the appearance of *Ballads and Other Poems* in 1880, where he returned to less ambitious and lengthy but more

congenial forms—a collection which Mr. Theodore Watts terms “the most richly various volume of English verse that has appeared in [Tennyson’s] century.” At intervals until the very close of his long life, he produced similar miscellaneous collections of poems: *Tiresias and Other Poems*, 1885, *Demeter and Other Poems*,[†] 1889, *The Death of Oenone and Other Poems*, 1892. Some of the pieces contained in these miscellanies were doubtless the gleanings of earlier years; but in others there were qualities which clearly showed them to be the products of a new epoch in a genius that went on changing and developing even in advanced old age. In the most characteristic pieces, *The Recapture*, *The Relief of Lucknow*, *Rizpah*, *Vastness*, etc., there is a vigour and dramatic force absent in his earlier work, with less of that minute finish and elaborate perfection of phrase which is so often his chief merit. On the other hand, in *Freedom*, *To Virgil*, and *Crossing the Bar*, we have poems in the more familiar Tennysonian style, not a whit inferior to similar compositions in the volumes of his prime. In 1884 Tennyson was raised to the peerage as Baron of Aldworth and Farringford. The first part of his title was derived from a second residence which he had built for himself in Surrey, choosing a very retired situation in order that he might escape the idle curiosity of tourists. In 1886, the second great sorrow of his life befell Tennyson; his younger son, Lionel, died on the return voyage from India, where he had contracted a fever. The poet himself died just before dawn on October 6th, 1892, full of years, yet with mental powers scarcely abated.

Some personal peculiarities may be added. Although so accurate an observer of nature, Tennyson was very short-sighted. He was subject to fits of intense abstraction similar to those recorded of Socrates. He said to Mr. Knowles: “Sometimes as I sit here alone in this great room I get carried away out of sense and body, and rapt into mere existence, till the accidental touch or movement of one of my own fingers is like a great shock and blow and brings the body back with a terrible start.”†

“His reading was always in a grand, deep, measured voice, and was rather intoning in a few notes than speaking. It was like a sort of musical thunder, far off or near—loud rolling or ‘sweet and low’—according to the subject, and once heard could never be forgotten”

Twenty thousand copies of this book were sold within a week.

† Compare *In Memoriam*, xcv, and the trances of the Prince in *The Princess*. In reference to the former passage he said: “I’ve often a strange feeling of being wound and wrapped in the Great Soul.”

(Knowles). Miss Thackeray (Mrs. Ritchie) confirms this, describing it as "a sort of mystical incantation, a chant in which every note rises and falls and reverberates again." But some who heard him complain that his reading was so inarticulate as to be scarcely intelligible.

"His acquaintance with all previous poetry was unlimited and his memory amazing" (Knowles).

His ideas in regard to 'the great problems' seem to have varied from time to time. The Rev. Doctor Gatty records: "Many years ago I had a conversation with the poet in his attic study at Farringford, that lasted till nearly day-break. He discoursed on many subjects, and when we touched on religion, he said, 'I am not very fond of creeds: it is enough for me to know that God Himself came down from heaven in the form of man.'"^{*} He was always greatly interested in the question of a future life and clung passionately to the belief in a personal immortality. Mr. Knowles reports that, in conversation with him, Tennyson formulated his creed thus: "There's a Something that watches over us; and our individuality endures: that's my faith, and that's all my faith." "My greatest wish," he once said, "is to have a clearer vision of God."

General Characteristics.

Tennyson's Success.—Tennyson's poetic career was an unusually long one, extending as it did over more than sixty years, and during all that time there was no marked decadence of power such as has been so often manifest in the later work of imaginative writers. Very early in that career he was successful in winning the highest position in popular estimation, and may be said to have maintained it steadily until the end. The partial eclipse of his fame during the seventies was due rather to his employing his powers in the uncongenial sphere of the drama, than to any actual decay of force. It must be further noted that Tennyson's work was not merely esteemed, it was *read*—and that not by a clique of admirers merely, or by a select number of cultivated people, or by the uncritical public alone; it was widely read and really enjoyed by all classes that are at all interested in poetry. Like Pope he was speedily and generally accepted as adequately voicing the thoughts and feelings of his contemporaries. Such success always

^{*} Compare the prologue to *In Memoriam*.

implies some specially happy adaptation of the genius of the writer to the conditions of his era, an adaptation which spares him from the conflict and dissipation of force arising from attempts to embody themes and to adopt methods to which the age is little favourable; the inborn aptitudes of such a poet must be in harmony with existing tendencies and the tastes of his contemporaries.

Poetic conditions in his time.—Tennyson himself indicates the prime conditions, positive and negative, to which the successful poet of his own time had to accommodate himself. "I soon found," he once said in conversation with his friend, Mr. James Knowles, "that if I meant to make any mark at all it must be by shortness, for all the men before me had been so diffuse and all the big things had been done. To get the workmanship as nearly perfect as possible is the best chance for going down the stream of time. A small vessel on fine lines is likely to float farther than a great raft."*

Tennyson here emphasizes two points, (1) the very obvious fact that he is a late poet, and (2), in consequence of that fact, that he could hope to excel only by perfection in detail and finish in technique. He is not merely a late poet in the midst of a vast accumulation of the work of predecessors in his own and other languages; the natural effect of such lateness is intensified by the fact that he comes at the close of one of those eras of marked fertility which are conspicuous at intervals in the history of poetic literature, and are separated by other eras of comparative barrenness and mediocrity. The great movement which had its beginning in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and reached its brilliant culmination in the work of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats, was, when Tennyson reached maturity (as is abundantly clear to us now), passing into its latest phase. He is a poet, if not of the decline, at least of the close, when the first enthusiasm has spent itself, when the new fields have been traversed, when the new forms have lost their novelty. Such a writer is under serious disadvantages; the most obvious or suitable themes have been treated, the early freshness has vanished. But first enthusiasm, new methods, and new themes are not favourable to perfection in detail. That comes from experience, from calm judgment, and laborious care. And here the later poet has advantages which the earlier does not enjoy. Greatness of conception may be supposed to be dependent on the individual mind, but the history of all arts shows that supreme technical skill can

* See the interesting article entitled *Aspects of Tennyson in Nineteenth Century* for January, 1893.

only be attained through the experiments, successes, and failures of generations of artists; primitive art is always awkward, new attempts inevitably suffer under defects of form. The opportunity for the poet in Tennyson's day, as he himself thought, lay in technique, in finish, in detail; and his own endowments and circumstances were such as to fit him for success in these respects. The conditions of his personal life were favourable to culture. Beyond preceding eras, the Nineteenth Century possessed the historic sense, rendered accessible, and was capable of appreciating, the literary stores of the past. Tennyson himself was endowed with openness of mind, catholic tastes, great powers of assimilation, and scholarly aptitudes. He became early familiar with the best that had been done; he was well read not only in his mother tongue, but in Greek, Latin and Italian literatures. If, then, he felt (as he himself confesses) hampered by the existence of all this splendid poetry of his predecessors, he at least succeeded in making the best of the circumstance,—studied their art, borrowed multitudinous hints, phrases, images from their works. So the reader of his works is struck by his eclecticism, the power of learning from writers of diverse genius, ages, and nations, and of welding varied materials into new and perfect wholes. Especially do we note this breadth and catholicity of Tennyson's genius, when we compare his work with that of his immediate fore-runners, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley and Scott, each somewhat narrow in his poetic tastes, and excelling within a somewhat limited province. Tennyson profits by the example of writers as different as Wordsworth and Keats; he attempts varied subjects and different manners: classic, romantic, domestic themes; the simple and the ornate style; lyric, dramatic, narrative poetry; song, monologue, idyll. His success is, upon the whole, extraordinary; and this versatility makes it difficult to characterize his work in general terms. At the same time, it is abundantly manifest that only certain of these attempts are wholly congenial to his mind and manner, that others, however excellent, are *tours de force*—the results of great general poetic power patiently and judiciously employed in using what he has learnt from others.

Perfection of his work in detail.—To this breadth of taste and of reading, this power of profiting by example, Tennyson added a natural aptitude for detail, for careful and finished work. His poetic character is here in harmony with the general tendency of his age, especially manifest in the minuteness and accuracy of modern science. The same spirit is present in his delineations of nature, which surpass those of

earlier poets in the minuteness and accuracy of the features noted. His earliest publications seem to show that what impelled him to poetry was not the need of embodying some pressing thought or feeling, but the delight in heaping together beautiful details, the pleasure in musical phrases, exquisite imagery, in the skill of the artist. Whatever charm exists in such characteristic poems as *Claribel*, or the *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, lies in the details; the meaning and purport of the whole is vague. Tennyson's earliest efforts are marked by paucity of thought, absence of intense feeling, but by exuberant richness of expression. This richness was, at the beginning, excessive and unformed; but presently the poet showed that he had unusual capacity for laborious revision and self-criticism. He rapidly developed critical judgment and self-restraint. He could learn even from the galling article in *The Quarterly* for 1833.* We hear of the endless pains with which he polished line after line before publication; and, even after that, the successive texts of many passages† exhibit emendations extraordinarily numerous, minute, and effective. One is particularly surprised by the extent to which in many cases the final beauty and power of a passage are the creation of these changes, and are absent from the original text.

Even the limitations of Tennyson's genius helped him to excel in his own particular sphere. He lacked the impetuous temperament which we are wont to associate with the highest poetic endowment, ardour which springs from intense feeling or the consciousness of abundant material pressing for utterance, or of great thoughts to be revealed. There are, indeed, two kinds of artistic workers. Some are so dominated by the feeling, or thought, that it seems to take form without the conscious intervention of the artist himself. Or, at least, his thoughts and feelings are primarily busied with the whole conception—the mood, character, situation, or whatever else it may be—and all details are suggested from, and considered in relation to, this central idea. In others, there is no such dominating inspiration; the primary interest is in the beauty of detail; the whole is of secondary interest sought out as a centre and support for the parts. To Wordsworth, his own message seemed of such weight, that its form must have always had but a second place; the emotional temperament of Shelley would not permit

* See Dixon's *Primer of Tennyson*, pp. 40, fol. "Some of the pieces which drew forth [the reviewer's] sarcastic comments were omitted from future editions, and almost all were altered or re-written in respect of the censured passages."

† In *The Lady of Shalott*, *Oenone*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, striking examples are to be found.

him coldly to reshape what had been moulded in the white heat of inspiration. These two poets belong to the first-mentioned kind. But if the relative importance of the impressions made upon the reader by successive passages and by the whole outcome, be a criterion, Tennyson, unlike them, is an artist of the other class. Of this there is a quaint illustration in a letter* of his friend Spedding, written shortly before the composition of *Enoch Arden*: "Alfred," he says, "wants a story to treat, being full of poetry with nothing to put it in." We get a hint of this tendency to work up details, apart from the theme which they were to unfold, in the poet's letter to Mr. S. E. Dawson prefixed to the latter's edition of *The Princess*: "There was a period in my life," writes Tennyson, "when, as an artist—Turner, for instance,—takes rough sketches of landscape, etc., in order to work them eventually into some great picture; so I was in the habit of chronicling, in four or five words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque in nature." We note, too, how he uses over again, in new connections, lines and phrases employed in pieces which he suppressed.

Metrical and musical effects.—The most universal and characteristic quality of Tennyson's work, then, is its perfection in detail—its finished technique, the beauty which pertains to each line and phrase. We may next inquire by what devices he attains this beauty of detail, and in what special peculiarities of technique does this mastery exhibit itself. If we turn for a clue to his earlier poems, where his natural bent is most likely to exhibit itself clearly, the first quality which gives them distinction is the subtle adaptation of sound to sense,—the attempt, by varying of lines and stanzas, by the adjustment of verse pauses, of metrical feet, of vowel and consonantal sounds, to reflect and suggest the meaning and emotional accompaniments of the thought expressed. The poet, in fact, seeks to approximate through the articulate sounds of verse to the effects produced by music. The poem to which he gave the first place in the volume of 1830, significantly entitled "*Claribel, a Melody*," exhibits this musical quality almost to the exclusion of any other; and the prevalence of this quality throughout the volume is the most novel and striking characteristic of the new poet's work. An attempt of this kind naturally leads to the taking of great liberties with the regular norm of verse in order to attain suitably varied effects; hence one is struck by the apparent capriciousness of lines and stanzas; and Coleridge was led to say after examining these pieces that the author "had begun to write poetry without

* Quoted in Dixon's *Primer*, p. 107.

very well understanding what metre was." In time, however, Tennyson learned to combine musical with properly metrical effects, and such a piece as *The Lotos-Eaters* is an example of his triumphant success. But everywhere in his poetry, this imitative rhythm is present, most effective, perhaps, when least obtrusive—when it is felt, but is scarcely capable of being exactly indicated and analysed. The influence of this tendency on his blank verse is to give it great variety, and to produce a large number of lines in which wide departures are made from the regular metrical norm. For example, in the following cases there is a multiplication of unaccented syllables :

Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn.
—*The Princess*.
 Of some precipitous rivulet to the sea,
—*Gareth and Lynette*.
 Melody on branch and melody in mid air.
—*Ibid*.
 I saw the flaring atom-streams
 Ruining along the illimitable inane.
—*Lucretius*.

Again, by the arrangement of the main pauses, a sudden break is made in the flow of the verse in keeping with the meaning conveyed :

his arms
 Clash'd ; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.
—*Gareth and Lynette*.
 Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching wave
 Drops flat.
—*The Last Tournament*.
 made his horse
 Caracole ; then bow'd his homage, bluntly saying, etc.
—*Ibid*.
 Flash'd, started, met him at the door, and these, etc.
—*Ibid*.

These are two of the commonest devices of this character, but a little careful examination will reveal a great many of a more subtle or composite kind, for example :

Down the long stairs, hesitating.
—*Lancelot and Elaine*.
 So strode he back slow to the wounded king.
—*Morte d'Arthur*.
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.
—*Ulysses*.
 The long day wanes : the slow moon climbs : the deep
 Moans round with many voices.
—*Ibid*.

Again, we are often conscious of a subtle appropriateness in the choice of the vowel or consonantal sounds :

The moan of doves in immemorial elms
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

—*The Princess.*

The long low dune and lazy-plunging sea.

—*The Last Tournament.*

Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,
Shield breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash, etc.

—*The Passing of Arthur.*

The league-long roller thundering on the reef.

—*Enoch Arden.**

Kindred but broader effects are produced by the poet's happy selection and management of stanza-forms, of which his works afford a great variety. Compare, for example, the four-line stanzas of *In Memoriam*, of the song in *The Brook*, of *The Palace of Art*, and note how each one admirably suits the theme for which it is employed. Many different elements are combined in the appropriate and subtly varied music of the following exquisite lines :—

I.

O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again !

II.

When I was wont to meet her
In the silent woody places
By the home that gave me birth,
We stood tranced in long embraces
Mixt with kisses sweeter sweeter
Than anything on earth.

*Also contrast the vowel effects in

On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full

with

And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.

For further examples, see the Introduction to the Tennyson volumes in *English Classics* edited by Mr. Rowe.

III.

A shadow flits before me,
 Not thou, but like to thee :
 Ah Christ, that it were possible
 For one short hour to see
 The souls we loved, that they might tell us
 What and where they be.

Etc.

—*Maud*, Pt. ii.**Pictorial details used to suggest a thought, feeling, or situation.—**

In the last paragraph attention has been drawn to the way in which the poet, through sound and metrical effects, indirectly suggests and instils the fitting tone of mind and feeling. Another peculiarity of his technique, conspicuous in his earliest volumes and pervading all his work, is a similar indirect method of suggesting or presenting a situation through the details of landscape and other material surroundings. The genius of Tennyson is eminently pictorial; he delights and excels in pictures of external objects; *The Recollections of the Arabian Nights* is nothing but a series of these, and the whole of the volume which contained this poem, bore evidence of this tendency. Such a preference does the poet's genius have for these picturesque effects that, instead of directly describing some inner condition of mind or feeling, or in addition to directly describing it, he reflects it through the external surroundings. For example, he wishes us to understand and feel the desolation and loneliness of Mariana in the poem so named; yet he does not describe the mood directly. The whole poem is a picture of the moated grange and its surroundings, from which he selects every sight and sound that may suggest loneliness and long neglect. "There is not, throughout the poem, a single epithet which belongs to the objects irrespective of the story with which the scene is associated, or a single detail introduced which does not aid the general expression of the poem. They mark either the pain with which Mariana looks at things, or the long neglect to which she has been abandoned, or some peculiarity of time and place which marks the morbid minuteness of her attention to objects." * The landscape of *The Lotus-Eaters* affords a masterly illustration of the same artifice. In *The Lady of Shalott* the scene changes to harmonize with the situation of the heroine; in the *Idylls of the King* we find this device systematically followed; the season of the year during which the action of each idyll is represented as taking place reflects and reinforces the pervading tone of that particular incident.

* See Brimley's *Essay*, pp. 8 fol., from which the above sentences are quoted.

Vocabulary and Phraseology.—Passing on to an examination of more minute elements of his style, his vocabulary and phraseology, we find them characterized by the same care and discrimination, by the same seeking after picturesque effects and beauty ; we feel also the same sense of conscious artifice ; we note a constant indebtedness to the works of his predecessors, and a masterly skill in adapting for his own purposes the happy phrases and images which he has met in his reading.* Tennyson, as has already been noted, is a versatile poet, and great variety of styles may be found in his collected works,—sometimes he is simple, sometimes realistic, but the manner most natural to him, which is most pervading, and most characteristic in his work, is a highly ornate one. It exhibits a richness and fulness of colour and imagery that is apt to withdraw the mind from the whole theme and outcome of a piece, to admiration and enjoyment of each passing phrase and image. The poet seems instinctively to select his theme so as to give scope for the exhibition of this quality, rather than for bringing home to the heart and imagination of the reader some profoundly human situation. The anguish of despised and deserted love is a subject for the highest poetry ; but it is not the anguish and sadness of the woman Oenone for which we chiefly care when we read Tennyson's poem, but the idyllic and classic surroundings of the mountain-nymph, the beauty of successive lines, pictures, and passages. *Morte d'Arthur* (masterpiece although it is) and all the Idylls win their power in a large measure from the same sources. For such purposes the simple and direct style is little suitable—the style where the words seem to come to the poet's pen unbidden, where the expression is so naturally the outcome of the idea as to be transparent, where the thought is so completely brought home to the imagination and heart that the manner is unnoted.† In Tennyson's expression the artist is always felt ; the conscious perception of his skill is a large part of the pleasure. So in his diction, while he does not avoid the vocabulary of ordinary life which Wordsworth preferred, he on the whole prefers a word or phrase with distinctly poetic

*Mr. Churton Collins devotes a volume (*Illustrations of Tennyson*) to tracing such adaptations. Many cases are pointed out in the notes to this volume.

† “Tennyson's decorative art, his love of colour for its own sake, of music for its own sake, lead him at times into what must always seem to the highly cultivated sense extravagances of colour, an over-profusion, a lush luxuriance, and into similar extravagances of sound. To put it briefly, he rarely trusts his thought, as Wordsworth trusted it, to build for itself a natural home of expression. So much an artist was he that Nature could not speak his language, and hence the inevitable word is rarely heard in his poetry.” (Dixon, *Primer of Tennyson*, pp. 83-4.)

associations. He employs the language of earlier poetry, obsolete and rare words, antiquated preterits and past participles, novel compounds, double-epithets.* He thus wins a charm for his style, but it is not the charm of simplicity and directness, but of florid and elaborate beauty. Ingenious and picturesque periphrases supply the place of commonplace terms: so we find "the knightly growth that fringed [Arthur's] lips," "the azure pillars of the hearth" (smoke from chimneys), "moving isles of winter" (icebergs), "took a word and played upon it and made it two colours" (punned), "unclasp'd the wedded eagles of her belt," "nor fail in childward care" (care of children), etc. In this matter he is a follower of Keats, to whom of all English poets he owes most and whom he most resembles; but Tennyson manifests, after his earliest attempts at least, a moderation and good judgment which are his own. The pictorial character of his style is observable in the success with which he suggests the proper image by even a single word: "the ripple *washing* in the reeds," "the wild water *lapping* on the crag," "she *shrilling*, let me die," "*creamy* spray," "little breezes *dusk and shiver*."

The ever-silent spaces of the East
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

—*Tithonus*.

Fiercely flies
The blast of North and East, and ice
Makes laggings at the sharpen'd eaves,
And bristles all the brakes and thorns
To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
Above the wood which grides and elangs
Its leafless ribs and iron horns.

—*In Memoriam*, cvii.

Similarly we note the exquisite finish and picturesqueness of phrase: "the lucid interspace of world and world."

So dark a forethought rolled about his brain
As on a dull day in an ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long sea hall
In silence.

* Such as *hest*, *marish*, *hooves*, *enow*, *adorn*, *anear*, *boscage*, *brewis*, *boughts*, *cate*, *to oar*, *rathe*, *lurdan*, *turriance*, *tinct*, *brand*, *Pagnim*, *scud*; *clomb*, *surare*, *spake*, *brake*, *foughten*; *brain-feverous*, *green-glimmering*, *sallow-rifted*, *strange-statued*, *crag-carven*, *ruby-huddled*.

Of course such words form only a very small percentage, but it should be noted that a few scattered words of this character suffice to give the predominant effect to a passage, just as a few dialectic terms and forms suffice, in the best writers, to give the desired local or conversational colour.

Akin to this felicity of phrasing and this success in appropriating picturesque words, in his power of seizing on the minuter features of nature, and his skill in flashing them upon the inward eye. It is particularly in the minuteness and accuracy of his observation of nature, that his descriptions are differentiated from those of his predecessors :

hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides three-fold to show the fruit within.
—*The Brook.*

With blasts that blow the poplar white.
—*In Memoriam*, lxii.
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the *silver gossamers*
That twinkle into green and gold.
—*Ibid*, xi.

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush ;
Or underneath the barren bush
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March.
—*Ibid*, xci.

(See also preceding stanzas).

Till now the doubtful dark reveal'd
The knolls once more where, couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field.
—*Ibid*, xcv.

The steer forgot to graze
And, where the hedgerow cuts the pathway, stood
Leaning his horns into the neighbour field,
And lowing to his fellows.
—*The Gardener's Daughter.*

Nigh upon the hour
When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams
Of goodly supper in a distant pool.
—*Gareth and Lynette.*

Lyrical expression of thought and feeling.—This skill in technique which we have been emphasizing, and the patient laboriousness and good judgment of Tennyson are qualities of wide application, and likely to give a measure of success in almost any sort of poetry which he might attempt. And indeed this success has in some measure followed the poet everywhere. In his dramas, for example, a species of art to which by universal admission, neither the poet's genius, nor the circumstances of his life, nor the conditions of his age were suited, the critics are disposed to wonder less at the defects exhibited than at

the excellence attained. Accordingly, to assertions which are true of Tennyson's work in general, it may often be possible to adduce striking exceptions. If we deny him the power of representing commonplace, contemporary men, or humour, we are confronted with *The Northern Farmer*; if playfulness, with *The Talking Oak*; if realistic tragic power, with *Rizpah*. Yet, while not denying the many shapes in which the poet's genius has shown itself, there are certain forms in which he manifestly is most completely at his ease, and certain kinds of poetry which we associate especially with him. In the first place, Tennyson excels in the lyric delineation of his own moods and feelings; of this power, *In Memoriam* gives the fullest exemplar. Among these moods he has a unique gift for rendering vague, evanescent, subtle shades of feeling, so delicate as scarcely to be capable of direct expression in language; but which may be adumbrated—by a method which we have already noted to be specially Tennyson's own—through the rhythm and music of the verse and through the use of external details. So the familiar song "Break, break, break" finds expression for dumb, wistful grief in the grey, dull scenery of the coast.* "Tears, idle tears," "Far, far away," *Crossing the Bar*, "The splendour falls," etc., furnish other masterly examples of the same power.

Expression of feeling and thought through concrete pictures.—In the second place, the poet excels in the *indirect* presentation of similar moods, feelings and thoughts through an objective situation or character. We have already called attention to this species of poetry in *Mariana*, but higher manifestations of this faculty are afforded by *Ulysses*, *Tithonus*, *The Lotus-Eaters*, *Morte d'Arthur*, *Merlin and the Gleam*. Here the traits of character, the details of scene or situation are selected not merely in order to produce an effective picture, although that is one object, but to body forth an inner experience. The poet himself has told us that this is true of the finest of these poems, *Ulysses*. He says, after speaking about *In Memoriam*: "There is more of myself in "Ulysses," which was written under the sense of loss and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end"

* See Hutton's *Literary Essays*, p. 372, fol.: "Observe how the wash of the sea on the cold gray stones is used to prepare the mind for the feeling of helplessness with which the deeper emotions break against the hard and rigid element of human speech; how the picture is then widened out till you see the bay with children laughing on its shore, and the sailor-boy singing on its surface, and the stately ships passing on in the offing to their unseen haven, all with the view of helping us to feel the contrast between the satisfied and unsatisfied yearnings of the human heart."

(See article by Mr. Knowles, *Nineteenth Century*, Jan. 1893). Such a poem gives scope to the poet's pictorial faculty, yet it is imbued with a deeper meaning and intenser feeling which elevates it above mere description.*

His Idylls.—In the third place, Tennyson's qualities lend themselves especially to, and have been repeatedly employed upon, still another poetic form, the Idyll. The name, which, like the thing, is derived from the Greeks, means 'a little picture.'† It was one of the latest literary forms to arise in Greek literature, and was developed in an era resembling our own, when to use Tennyson's language, all the great things had been done, and the poet's chance for going down the stream of time lay in brevity and finish. The word 'idyll,' therefore, (though like most poetic terms, it can only be vaguely defined) is applied to short poems of a pictorial character, couched in an elaborate and finished style, where the aim of the poet is rather to charm the æsthetic feelings by the beauty of the pictures suggested, and by the exquisite skill of the workmanship, than to move the heart by the greatness of the theme, or the truth and intensity of the delineation. In the development of poetry, grand and obvious subjects are likely to be treated first; and since these are themselves moving and beautiful, the poet cannot do better than bring them home, with the utmost vividness and truth, to the imagination of his readers; this he will best succeed in doing by the use of the simple, transparent, direct style. But when the great themes are exhausted, and the poets, in search of fresh matter, turn to trivial subjects, or subjects not wholly beautiful, or not intensely interesting and touching, they strive to make amends, for these deficiencies, by a style which gives pleasure in itself, by ornamentation which is beautiful and appropriate, but not absolutely needful for the presentation of the theme, and by idealizing with a view to æsthetic charm, rather than with a view to profound emotional effects. In *Oenone*, for example, Tennyson presents a subject

*See Hutton, *Literary Essays*, p. 364, fol.: "Even when Tennyson's poems are uniformly moulded by an 'infused' soul, one not infrequently notices the excess of the faculty of vision over the governing conception which moulds the vision, so that I think he is almost always most successful when his poem begins in a thought or a feeling rather than from a picture or narrative, for then the thought or feeling dominates and controls his otherwise too lavish fancy. 'Ulysses' and 'Tithonus' are far superior to 'Oenone,' exquisite as the pictorial workmanship of 'Oenone' is. . . . Whenever Tennyson's pictorial fancy has had it in any degree in its power to run away with the guiding and controlling mind, the richness of the workmanship has to some extent overgrown the spiritual principle of his poems."

†See Stedman's *Victorian Poets*, chap. vi.

from Greek legend, unreal and remote to us, and therefore, however pathetic the situation represented, incapable of kindling our deepest sympathy. On the other hand, it is a subject full of æsthetic situations, affording ample scope for the display of sensuous beauty, and free from the commonplaceness and ugliness which must always cling to what is derived from our actual world. In other idylls, the poet does not go so far afield for a theme ; in *The Gardener's Daughter*, he takes contemporary life ; but again, he selects on the ground of beauty and charm, and excludes every trait which might interfere with these ; as a consequence, we may say, the picture is so idyllic, that we scarcely feel it to be actual and real. It does not stir the deeper feelings connected with love, as *Romeo and Juliet* does ; the poet makes no such attempt. Again, in *Enoch Arden* we have a theme intensely pathetic, taken from homely, actual English life ; yet the author does not depend mainly upon the genuine poetic power of his matter, does not treat it *simply*, as Wordsworth has treated a similar theme in *Michael* ; Tennyson's treatment is idyllic, and the actual characteristics of the story are lost in the gorgeous and alien ornament.* Again the *Idylls of the King*, though in their final shape aiming at something beyond mere idyllic beauty, and bound into a larger unity, are yet on the basis of their general style and character, properly termed idylls. Their chief interest does not depend upon the loftiest elements that can enter into a work of art, the truthful and powerful presentation of human life and character ; they do not stir our sympathies and interest as these are stirred by the spectacle of actual existence. For notwithstanding the pathos and tragic force of occasional passages, we are, on the whole, drawn to the *Idylls of the King*, not by our sympathy with the personages, their sufferings and their destiny, but by enjoyment of the verse, by diction and imagery, by the charm of a picture more

* See Bagehot's Essay on *Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning*. Mr. Bagehot happily cites, as an exaggerated example of this ornate style, the following passage, where the poet intentionally obscures and hides the real subject, viz., the peddling of fish (which is certainly not poetical) by quite extraneous details :

Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean spoil
In ocean-smelling osier, and his face,
Rough-reddened with a thousand winter gales,
Not only to the market-cross were known
But in the leafy lanes behind the down,
Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp
And peacock yew-tree of the lonely hall,
Whose Friday fare was Enoch's ministering.

romantic and sensuously beautiful than that afforded by the real world, Tennyson showed a certain shyness of the task of representing actual life as it is. The condition of society, manners, and thought in the *Idylls of the King* plainly did not exist at any period of the world's history. In *The Princess*, where the theme and central situation belongs essentially to the present day, where the character, thoughts, aims, pursuits of the heroine bear unmistakably the impress of the nineteenth century, the poet does not venture to give these a realistic setting; but with the aid of reminiscences from chivalry and the Middle Ages, constructs a wholly fanciful but very beautiful background for his picture. Some poets reveal the great and beautiful by penetrating beneath the superficial husk of the commonplace and ugly in life about us; others, like Keats and Tennyson, by casting about it an atmosphere of charm, a glamour of fancy. "It is the distance," said Tennyson, "that charms me in the landscape, the picture and the past, and not the immediate to-day in which I move." *

In pointing out the fact that idyllic poetry is not of the highest order, we are neither condemning it nor disparaging Tennyson. In the domain of poetic art there are many mansions; the idyll has its place and functions. We do not always desire the grander, more profound, and therefore more exacting, art of *Othello* and *Lear*. At times we are glad to escape to the charm and beauty of a fanciful world, remote from this of our real experience. In the sort of poetry which soothes and charms, yields calm pleasure, and pure, yet sensuous, delight, Tennyson is a master; and, in particular, he has almost identified the idyll in English literature with his own name.

His longer works.—One point in Tennyson's deliverance (see p. 194) on the conditions of poetry in his day, remains to be noted. Whether it is true or not that "all the big things had been done," it is unquestionably true in Tennyson's own case that he makes his mark "by shortness." Grandeur and grasp of conception, the ability to conceive a great whole which should be an effective artistic unit, was not his. That mental peculiarity which, as we have seen, inclined him to work from details upwards, rather than from the general conception downwards, is still more evident when we examine the structure of his more ambitious attempts. His longer poems are made by joining together smaller wholes; their unity is a second and added idea. In *In Memoriam*, there is, doubtless, a line of development, a connection in the

* *Aspects of Tennyson*, in *Nineteenth Century* for January, 1893.

thoughts, and a unity of tone among the several lyrics; they arise from a common germinal experience, they follow in natural sequence; but they are not manifestly members of an organized body to whose beauty and completeness they contribute, and which would be maimed by their absence. They are scarcely more a whole, than the series of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*; they are not a unit in the sense in which *Macbeth*, or *Othello*, or *Romeo and Juliet*, or *Paradise Lost* is a unit. Tennyson's remark as to the way in which *In Memoriam* was constructed is significant in this connection: "The general way of its being written was so queer that if there were a blank space, I would put in a poem," and might, apparently, be applied also to the *Idylls of the King* and to *Maud*. It is noteworthy with regard to the former—the most ambitious of his "big things"—that several of the parts were published before the whole was *clearly* conceived, if conceived at all (See notes on *Lancelot and Elaine*, p. 266); and that several other parts were added after the whole had been *apparently* completed. The unity is of the loosest kind; there is no steady development of plot interest. Each idyll does not win its complete and deepest interest from its relation to the whole, as in the case with each scene of Shakespeare's plays, and each book of *Paradise Lost*. Again in *Maud*, the central and finest lyric "O that 'twere possible" was published long before *Maud* was written or dreamed of. It was a second thought to build around this a series of songs which should unfold a character and a story; the poem affords no stringent standard by which we can say that each of these songs is, or is not necessary; they might have been either more or fewer. What is of still greater importance; several of these songs—the one just referred to, for example—do not lose, but actually gain by being considered apart from the context, by being separated from the hysterical hero and his story. There remains (apart from the dramas) one other long work *The Princess*; this *does* possess more of unity; yet the poet himself is sensible of some incongruity in the structure; and in order that his work may not be tried by the strictest standard of art, he imaginatively accounts for this defect by adding a prologue and epilogue which explain that *The Princess* is not to be treated as the conception of one mind, but as a story told by seven different narrators, and, in consequence, it "moves in a strange diagonal."† This apology for a lack of consistency is thrust into the foreground by the second title of the piece, "*The Princess; a Medley.*" To sum up, Tennyson's highest

* *Aspects of Tennyson*, by Knowles, in *Nineteenth Century* for Jan. 1893.

† See ll. 27-28 of the *Conclusion* to *The Princess*.

excellences do not arise from qualities which can be exhibited only in extensive poems upon great and broad themes, but from qualities which may also belong to short unambitious pieces. He requires neither the grandest sort of theme, nor a very extensive canvas to reveal the full power of his art.

General character of Tennyson's thought.—We have emphasized the adaptation of the peculiar endowments of Tennyson to the conditions and opportunities of poetic art in his day. These endowments have given him extraordinary excellence in technique; Tennyson is one of the most versatile and perfect artists among English poets. Turning now from form to thought and matter, such rank can no longer be maintained for him. In those earliest pieces where we find the main characteristics of his technique (though as yet somewhat crude) abundantly present, we also observe, on the whole, comparative thinness of matter. Undoubtedly, as he grew older, and experience and knowledge increased, his work became much less purely pictorial and fanciful; he infused more of human nature into his poems, dwelt less aloof in a world of fancy*; his sympathies widened, his heart was touched to deeper issues, and there was more of thought, of what Matthew Arnold calls 'the criticism of life'. A growing realism in the characters, and scenes depicted, and in the style employed, is especially noticeable in his later miscellaneous pieces beginning with the *Poems and Ballads* of 1880. But, after all, what gives Tennyson his high and unique place among the poets is, not power of thought, but power of form. He has no specially profound insight into character, or broad experience of life. His sensitive, shy, and, apparently, little genial nature, and the seclusion of his habits were not favourable to acquiring these. Nor is there any special originality in his ideas or in his attitude toward the facts of life. On the other hand, his receptive and active intelligence readily assimilated conceptions which were in the air; his calm and sane judgment enabled him to seize them in their truer and more permanent aspects; so that, while he makes no bold and original contributions to our store of ideas, no poet probably in the whole range of English literature has more fully and adequately voiced the thought and spirit of his own generation. This is another cause of his popularity. The ordinary reader is not repelled by ideas, or ways of viewing them, to which he is unaccustomed; he finds the questions in which he is interested, and the current opinions in

* Compare for example the fanciful and unreal, though exquisitely beautiful *Lady of Shalott*, with the more human story, made out of the same material, in *Lancelot and Elaine*.

regard to them. Fortunately for the poet, the age was fertile in novel and germinal conceptions, and he had rare skill in embodying these in poetic form without giving any sense of incongruity. His entrance upon his literary career was contemporaneous with the beginning of a marked epoch in intellectual and national progress.* In politics, the years of repression and stagnation which had originated in the dread of the French Revolution, and been prolonged by the struggle against Napoleon for national existence, began, about 1820, to yield before new forces in the political and intellectual world; it was fully ushered in by the realization of Parliamentary Reform in 1832. It was an age of rapid change, of great national development, of extraordinary commercial and scientific progress, of political theories and reforms, of new movements in philosophy and religion, and, in its earlier part, of great hopefulness. The chief characteristics of this age are faithfully reflected in Tennyson's verse—its optimism, its enthusiasm for science, its belief in the steady and rapid progress of social institutions towards perfection, its religious unrest, its new scientific ideas. But Tennyson outlived this epoch, as he outlived the greater number of his own contemporaries. In his old age he found many of the anticipations of his youth disappointed, he found himself amidst a generation exhibiting ultra-democratic and radical tendencies with which he could not sympathize,—he found the class to which he belonged by association and with

* "The very year of Tennyson's first volume [1830] was the year of the second French Revolution, and the second English revolution; the year of the 'Three Days' in Paris, and of the appearance of Lord Gray as Prime Minister in England and champion of the Reform Bill. It was the year of the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway. Mr. Baskisson, who met his death on that occasion, had recently brought forward the first notions of Free Trade, which the beginnings of steam navigation were soon to do much to develop. It was the year of Lyell's 'Principles of Geology,' and of Comte's 'Cours de Philosophie Positive.' Keble's 'Christian Year' had been printed in 1827; and in 1829 Catholic Emancipation had become law; and forthwith O'Connell began to agitate for Repeal of the Union. The position of the Irish Church was called in question in 1831; and in the same year the Corn Law Rhymes of Ebenezer Elliott preached more powerfully than from any pulpit a new doctrine for the poor:

'It is the deadly Power that makes
Bread dear and labour cheap.'

At this time rick-burning was rife (To 'Mary Boyle,' viii. ix, x. Also 'The Princess,' iv. 363-367), and Hunt and Cobbett were filling the new-forming mind of the masses with ideas of social equality, while the most autocratic of European nations, 'that overgrown Barbarian in the East' was absorbing Poland. The year of Tennyson's second volume passed the Reform Bill, brought out 'Tracts for the Times,' proposed to emancipate slaves, saw Faraday's Experiments in Electricity, and heard George Coombe's lecture on popular education." (Luce's *Handbook to Tennyson*, pp. 12-13.)

which he sympathized in virtue of its ideals and the beauty of its actual life—the landed gentry—losing political influence, suffering from material loss, possibly destined to be crushed out of existence in the struggle of modern life. The consequence of this, and of the natural effects of old age, is a marked change in the tone of his writings; a loss of hopefulness, a growing bitterness with the existing condition of things.*

Tennyson's preference for middle positions.—Tennyson was, however, not the mere creature of his age—a mirror to reflect indifferently each passing phase of thought. He had a pronounced personality of his own, which led him to find interest in some tendencies and to be unresponsive to others; to embody certain ideas with enthusiasm, and touch upon others only that he may testify his repugnance. We have already had occasion to mention a certain lack of ardour and impetuosity in the poet, calmness of temperament and self-control, sane judgment and good taste. Such qualities beget a constitutional preference for middle courses, a dislike of excess and extremes. We find, accordingly, Tennyson's sympathies are everywhere with moderate views: in politics, in religion, in the 'woman question,' etc. So, the slow and orderly development of the English nation, the self-restraint and spirit of compromise manifested in her history, the character of her existing institutions, the spirit in which the reforms of his own day were being carried out, were in harmony with the poet's nature, and inspired not a little of the fervour of the patriotic passages in his works. Even his æsthetic sense was satisfied with the venerable and orderly beauty of English institutions; just as he delighted to depict the embodiment of the same spirit and forces in the prevailing features of English landscape:

An English home-gray twilight pour'd
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Crudity, excess, violence, offended both his æsthetic and his intellectual nature. He believed in progress, but it must be gradual. He was, as the three political poems included in this volume show, a liberal conservative, in the natural sense of the words. He had no sympathy with the radicalism of his times, with root-and-branch theories that demanded sudden and violent changes in institutions and conditions to which his heart was attached. He had the historic sense of his age; it was not

*Compare the poem on *Freedom* with the political poems of 1833: "Love Thou Thy Land," etc.; and *Locksley Hall*, with *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*.

merely England as it existed, that he saw and loved ; it was England the embodiment of a long and unbroken development through the wise and heroic efforts of generations of Englishmen—England teeming with associations from a splendid past. But of the suffering and misery out of which came the radical theories that he disliked, he seems to have had no adequate sense, through limitations either of his sympathies or of his experience. He saw things too exclusively from the point of view of the country-gentleman—the class to which he was most closely bound, both by personal association, and by the beauty and charm of their life and its surroundings. But it was his good fortune, as far as immediate popularity was concerned, to be in thought and feeling the average educated Englishman ; though this also implied a narrowness, a lack of understanding of non-English conditions, of the point of view of other classes than his own, a want of sympathy with new social movements that, in turn, result in limitation and conventionality in his work.

His ideals of character and conduct.—As Tennyson's work is marked by good taste and moderation, as his character and life were exempt from marked eccentricities and departures from social conventions, and as his views were marked by a preference for middle courses ; so the ideals of character and conduct displayed in his poetry, exhibit kindred peculiarities. His King Arthur, the type of the highest manhood, is distinguished by his self-control, his good sense, his practical activity. When, in the *Holy Grail*, his knights ride away in pursuit of the Heavenly vision, the King remains at his post faithful to the more homely calls of life :

Seeing the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plow,
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done.

The evils and disorder which are represented as the consequences of the quest of the Grail, show that the poet's sympathies are not with the mystical enthusiasm of Galahad, but with the more prosaic and practical aims of Arthur—the redressing of wrong, the improvement of the condition of the race.* All that partakes of extravagance is

*“With Mr. Tennyson the mystic is always the visionary who suffers from an over-excitable fancy. The nobler aspects of the mystical religious spirit are unrepresented in his poetry. We find nowhere among the persons of his imagination a Teresa, uniting as she did in so eminent a degree an administrative genius, a genius for action with the genius of exalted piety.” (Dowden's *Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning*.)

foreign to his nature. Self-restrained characters are more to his taste than passionate ones. He does not succeed in depicting the latter class; the hero of *Maud* is morbid and excitable, not strong; does not exhibit the grand and imposing aspect of intense emotion. Tennyson's sympathies are with that thoroughly English ideal 'the gentleman'—an ideal where the controlling forces count for more than the impelling. The average Englishman admires the man who is strong to endure external shocks, who has his own nature well in hand, who severely restrains the exhibition even of perfectly innocent and laudable feelings; the demonstrativeness of the Frenchman and German, the passionate and effusive nature in general, have for him something effeminate. Here Tennyson and his audience are again at one. The rapturous and mystical communion with nature, which is the theme of Wordsworth's poetry, or the beauty and saving power of intense passion, of which Shelley and Browning are the apostles, meet no such ready response from Englishmen as the praise of self-restraint, of obedience to duty, of beneficent practical activity which are enshrined in Tennyson's writings. A disciplined nature wisely devoted to the practical work of improving society is Tennyson's highest ideal of life, the ideal he puts into the mouth of Athene—herself the incarnation of the wisdom and virtue which the Greek mind found in the mean:

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

.
Oh! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a god's,
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
Commensure perfect freedom."

His attitude towards the great questions.—Closely akin to these pervading tendencies of Tennyson's nature is his admiration and reverence for law.* This predominant trait of the poet's mind is revealed

* See Dowden's *Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning* in *Studies in Literature*.

not only in the political sphere upon which we have already lightly touched, but comes out in the way in which he regards the whole universe. Here, again, Tennyson is fortunate in his sensitive appreciation for an aspect of nature which has been revealed with unprecedented clearness and force by the modern science. He shares here to the full the enthusiasm of the scientific investigator. Further, the scientific conception that the whole universe is the manifestation, not only of law, but also of orderly, slow, and regular development, was in harmony with the poet's mind and feeling. He early accepted the idea of development; it is to be found in *In Memoriam*. But while entering heartily into the scientific enthusiasm of his time, both because science improved the condition of man's life and because scientific conceptions commended themselves to his own intellect and feeling, he was always strenuously opposed to the purely materialistic and non-spiritual views of the universe to which science was supposed by some to lead. The arguments from external nature adduced against theistic and spiritual ideas, he always met, as in *In Memoriam*, by arguments from the inner consciousness.* Akin to his rejection of materialism, is that strenuous adherence to the belief in immortality which comes out again and again in his poetry. It is interesting that the two greatest poets of the generation, Tennyson and Browning, should give such marked prominence to this matter in their works. But, apart from his conviction of spiritual and personal force in the universe, and of a personal immortality, Tennyson manifests the vagueness and doubt of his generation in regard to the great problems; and even the beliefs that he did maintain, he clings to rather than confidently maintains. This lack of strong convictions, of a message to convey, of ardent passion, of inspiration, his somewhat conventional and narrow range of sympathy, the elaboration of his style,—all contribute towards the sense that possesses the reader (notwithstanding all his admiration for the poet's work) that there is a something lacking, a want of force and of originality needful to put him in the very highest rank of poets. He soothes and charms rather than braces and inspires. He reflects our own thoughts rather than quickens us. He is a poet of beauty rather than of power.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY.—A memoir of Tennyson edited by his son is promised during the present year; among the necessarily unsatisfactory biographies hitherto published Waugh's *Alfred, Lord Tennyson* (2nd ed., 1893: Heinemann, London) may be mentioned. The *Poetical Works*

* See for example *In Memoriam*, cxxiv. See also on these points *Tennyson as the Poet of Evolution*, by Theodore Watts, in *Nineteenth Century*, vol. xxxiv.

are published in various forms by Macmillan, the most convenient being that in one vol., of which only the editions issued Sept. 1894 and later are complete. Annotated editions of a large number of the poems are to be found in various volumes of Macmillan's *English Classics*; also of the *Idylls of the King* and a number of other poems in volumes ed. by Rolfe (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.); also miscellaneous selections of the poems edited for Canadian schools by Messrs. Wetherell, Burt, Sykes, and Libby; to these editions the present editor is indebted, especially to Rolfe's for variant readings. A large Tennyson literature is now in existence, of which a useful bibliography will be found in Dixon's *Primer of Tennyson* (Methuen, London, 1896)—not only essays but volumes dealing either with his work in general or with special poems, particularly with the *Idylls of the King* and *In Memoriam*. Among these, Dixon's *Primer*, already mentioned, contains useful information and a judicious view of the poet's genius; Luce's *Handbook to the Works of Alfred Tennyson* (Bell, London, 1895), besides a general survey of Tennyson's work, takes up each poem individually; Stopford Brooke's *Tennyson: His Art and Relation to Modern Life* (Isbister, London, 1894) contains a very full critical examination of Tennyson's work; of treatises on individual poems, we have MacCailum's *Tennyson's Idylls and Arthurian Story* (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1894) mainly occupied by the history of these legends in literature, while Elsdale's *Studies in the Idylls* (Macmillan) and Littledale's *Essays on Tennyson's Idylls* are chiefly devoted with an examination and interpretation of the *Idylls* themselves; the articles on the *Idylls* in the *Contemporary Review* for Jan. 1870, and for May 1873, are based on the poet's own explanations; Dawson's *Study of the Princess* (Montreal, 1882), Genung's *In Memoriam* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), Gatty's *Key to In Memoriam* (Bell, London, 3rd ed. 1885), etc. For various readings and development of the text, Nicoll's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. II (Hodder and Stoughton), and Jones' *Growth of the Idylls of the King* (Lippincott, Phila., 1895); Churton Collins' *Illustrations of Tennyson* (Chatto and Windus, 1891) gathers illustrations and originals from Greek, etc. Critical essays: in Stedman's *Victorian Poets* (Houghton, Mifflin), in Brimley's *Essays* (Macmillan), Hutton's *Literary Essays* (Macmillan), Bagehot's *Literary Studies* (Longmans), Dowden's *Studies in Literature* (Kegan Paul), Ward's *English Poets* by Jebb, articles in the *Nineteenth Century* for 1893, etc.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.

This poem first appeared in the volume of 1830, and has undergone only slight alterations in text. It is a good example of the poet's earliest work,—of its musical charm and pictorial character, of richness and elaborateness of diction and imagery carried even to excess. It paints a series of pictures, charming from their sensuous beauty, which are suggested to Tennyson's imagination by reminiscences of the *Arabian Nights*, more particularly of one of the stories, that of *Nur Al-Din Ali and the Damsel Anis al Jalis*, especially of that part of the story narrated on the Thirty-sixth Night. The varying arrangement of the rhymes in the several stanzas should be noted.

Arabian Nights. The famous collection of Arabian stories known as *The Thousand and One Nights*, which, in abbreviated selections, is familiar to most children, especially through the story of *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp*.

7. Bagdat. A city situated on both banks of the Tigris, some 500 miles from its mouth. "It has an extremely picturesque appearance from the outside, being encircled and interspersed with groves of date trees, through which one may catch the gleams of domes and minarets." In the 9th century it was greatly enlarged by Haroun al Raschid.

fretted. See note on Gray's *Elegy*, l. 39.

9. sworn. 'Close' or 'firm'; cf. the expression "sworn friends."

10. golden prime. The epithet is not used in its literal sense, but as suggesting the Age of Gold—the period when, according to ancient myth, the world was in its perfection. *Prime* is the season of highest vigour and splendour.

11. Haroun, surnamed Al-Raschid ('the orthodox'), flourished 786-809 A.D. (*i.e.*, about the time of Charlemagne), caliph of Bagdat, famed for his bravery and magnificence, and for his patronage of literature and art.

12. Anight. 'By night'; cf. *As You Like It*, ii., 4: "Coming anight to Jane Smile."

15. citron-shadows. 'Shadows of the citron trees'; 'citron' is applied to lemon-trees and allied species.

23. **clear-stemm'd platans.** Oriental plane-trees which run up smoothly for some height before sending out their wide-spreading branches.

24. **The outlet of the river into the canal.**

26. **sluiced.** Led out by a sluice, which, in its narrow sense, is an artificial passage for water fitted with a gate. Cf. *Par. Lost*, i., 701 : "veins of liquid fire Sluic'd from the lake."

28-29. The green sward with its flowers resembled "damask-work" (raised patterns in a woven fabric) or "deep inlay" (ornamental work when pieces of wood, metal, ivory, etc., are let into a background of some different, or differently coloured, material).

36. **star-strown calm.** The smooth water in which the stars were reflected.

37. **night in night.** The still greater darkness caused by the close shadows of the trees.

40. **clomb.** Such antiquated verbal forms are very frequently employed by Tennyson; see p. 202.

47. **rivage.** Bank; Rolfe compares Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, iv., 6, 20 :

The which Pactolus with his waters shere
Throws forth upon the rivage round about him near.

An example of the sort of diction referred to on p. 202.

48-49. Note the abundance of epithets here, and throughout the poem.

52. **sparkling flints.** 'The gravel at the bottom of the stream'; it seems scarcely probable that these would be visible in the circumstances.

58. **engrain'd.** Properly 'dyed in fast colours'; the poet seems still to have the idea of a woven fabric in his mind, as at line 28.

59. **marge.** A common poetical form for "margin."

60. **fluted.** 'With longitudinal grooves'; as, *e.g.*, in Greek pillars.

63. **studded wide.** 'Embossed at intervals.' The word "studded" keeps up the idea of an ornamented surface (cf. ll. 25, 58).

64. **With disks and tiars.** "Disks" suggests round, flattish blossoms, "tiars" more elongated and convex forms. "Tiara" is

properly an eastern hat, and is naturally suggested by the locality of the poem. For the poetical form "tiar," cf. *Par. Lost*, iii., 625.

68. **In closest coverture.** 'So as to afford a close coverture'; Rolfe cites *Much Ado*, iii., 1: "in closest coverture."

70. **bulbul.** The Persian name for the nightingale.

71. **Not he, etc.** The song of the nightingale seems to express too much to be the voice of a bird merely; cf. Shelley's *To a Skylark*:

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart.

which possess'd. 'Held and interpenetrated.'

72-73. **delight, etc.,** are not governed by "possessed," but in apposition to "something."

74-75. 'A something which is eternal, of complex nature, irrepressible, above conditions of time and space.' With the whole passage cf. Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*.

76. **flattering.** 'Lending a lustre to'; cf. *Aylmer's Field*: "A splendid presence flattering the poor roofs," and Shakespeare, *Sonnet*, 33:

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye.

78. **Black.** The original reading was "black-green"; the change gives emphasis to "black," inasmuch as its one syllable does duty for the *two* syllables of the regular foot.

81. **A sudden splendour.** The light from the Pavilion of the Caliphate (see l. 114).

84. **counterchanged.** 'Interchanged;' cf. *In Memoriam*, lxxxix:

Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
Or this flat lawn with dusk and bright.

95. **as in sleep.** 'As if I were asleep.'

100. **drawn.** "Borne" was the original reading.

101. **pleasance.** Archaic and poetical for 'pleasure'. Cf. the following passage from the original story in the *Arabian Nights*: "Now this

garden was named the Garden of Gladness and therein stood a belvedere high the Palace of Pleasure."

106. **rosaries.** In the sense of the Latin original (*rosarium*), 'gardens, or beds, of roses.'

108. Symbols that belonged to, or recalled, the time.

112. **the long alley's latticed shade.** The original speaks of a walk with "a covering of trellis work of canes extending along the whole length."

114. **Caliphat** (usually "Caliphate") the dominion of the Caliphs, or successors of Mahomet.

122. In the original we are told that the palace was illuminated with "eighty latticed windows, and eighty lamps suspended, and in the midst a great candlestick of gold."

123. **quintessence.** The stress is usually upon the second syllable, but the pronunciation which the metre here requires, is also admissible.

125. **silvers.** A bold use of the plural, meaning, of course, 'silver candlesticks.'

127. **mooncd.** 'Ornamented with crescents'—the symbol of Turkish dominion, hence an anachronism here.

domes aloof In inmost Bagdat. The domes in the centre of the city, which stood out in the distance.

130. **time** is the object of "celebrate" (l. 131).

135. **argent-lidded.** "Argent" refers to the colour; so in *Dream of Fair Women*, l. 158: "the polish'd argent of her breast."

148. **diaper'd.** The word is applied to material covered with a regularly repeated pattern produced in the weaving without use of colour.

148-9. The lines seem to suggest that the cloth of gold had inwrought upon it garlands of flowers (as a border probably) and, besides that, a regularly repeated pattern (presumably in the main body of the cloth).

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

First published in 1832, but, as the notes show, the poem has been greatly improved by later revision. It is the first work which Tennyson based upon Arthurian legends; in this case contained, according to Palgrave, in an Italian novel (see note on l. 9). *Lancelot and Elaine* is a very different treatment of the same story where the interest is more human and the motives and characters perfectly comprehensible. Here we have a beautiful series of pictures presenting part of the history of a mysterious being, involved in a strange fate. This mystery of the poem suggests symbolism, to which the poet was inclined, as, for example, in *The Palace of Art* and the *Idylls of the King*; so Mr. Hutton seems to think that the history of the poet's own genius is shadowed forth, which "was sick of the magic of fancy and its picture-shadows, and was turning away from them to the poetry of human life." While Mr. Alfred Ainger (as quoted by Mr. Sykes) says: "The key to this wonderful tale of magic, and yet of deep human significance, is to be found, perhaps, in the lines:

Or when the moon was overhead
Came two young lovers lately wed;
'I am half sick of shadows' said
The Lady of Shalott.

The new-born love of something, for some one, in the wide world from which she has been so long excluded, takes her out of the region of shadows into that of realities. The curse is the anguish of unrequited love. The shock of her disappointment kills her." Mr. Ainger is probably much nearer the truth than Mr. Hutton; but it was doubtless the picturesque aspects of the subject, rather than any deep human significance that attracted and occupied the poet.

3. **wold.** 'Open country.' The landscape the poet was most familiar with at this time was the landscape of Lincolnshire. According to the *Century Dictionary* "The wolds of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire are high rolling districts, bare of trees and exactly similar to the downs of the southern part of England." The word appears in *Lear*, iii, 4, in the form "old."

meet the sky. Note how suggestive is the phrase of the wide uninterrupted prospect.

5. **many-tower'd Camelot.** Camelot is the capital of Arthur's domain, identified with Winchester by Malory (Bk. II, chap. xix); but

in Tennyson's treatment of the Arthurian legends, the scenes and geography are wholly imaginary, and the poet seems purposely to shun any touch which might serve to connect his scenes with actual localities.

In *Gareth and Lynette* we have a description of Camelot :

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in stone ;
Which Merlin's hand, the mage at Arthur's court,
Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere
At Arthur's ordinance, tip'd with lessening peak
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.

6-9. In the edition of 1832, these lines read—

The yellow-leavèd waterlily,
The green-sheathèd daffodilly,
Tremble in the water chilly,
Round about Shalott.

9. **Shalott.** This form of the name is probably suggested by Italian original *Donna di Scalotta*. In the *Idylls of the King*, 'Astolat,' the form used by Malory, is employed.

10-12. In 1832 the reading was—

Willows whiten, aspens shiver,
The sunbeam-showers break and quiver
In the stream that runneth ever.

10. **Willows whiten** through the breeze exposing the lower and lighter side of the willow leaves.

11. **dusk and shiver.** The darkening is due to the breaking up of the smooth surface of the water so that it no longer reflects the light.

19. The following two stanzas stood in the ed. of 1832 :—

Underneath the bearded barley,
The reaper, reaping late and early,
Hears her ever chanting cheerly,
Like an angel, singing clearly,
O'er the stream of Camelot.
Piling the sheaves in furrows airy,
Beneath the moon, the reaper weary
Listening whispers, ' 'tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott.'
The little isle is all inrailed
With a rose fence, and overtrailed

With roses: by the marge unhail'd
 The shallop flutteth silkensail'd,
 Skimming down to Camelot,
 A pearl garland winds her head;
 She leaneth on a velvet bed,
 Full royally apparelled
 The Lady of Shalott.

It will be noted that, in his second version, the poet gains the great advantage of indicating the *aloofness* of the mysterious heroine,—a prime point in the story—of which, as it originally stood, there was no indication in Pt. I.; the picture of the barges, etc., serves to intensify this by contrast. The vague echoes of song are in much better keeping with all the traits of the Lady of Shalott than the phrase, ‘like an angel, singing clearly.’

37. In the ed. of 1832:—

No time hath she to sport and play;
 A charmed web she weaves alway,
 A curse is on her if she stay
 Her weaving, either night or day,
 To look down to Camelot.
 She knows not what that curse may be;
 Therefore she weaveth steadily,
 Therefore no other care has she,
 The Lady of Shalott.
 She lives with little joy or fear,
 Over the water, running near,
 The sheepbell tinkles in her ear,
 Before her hangs a mirror clear,
 Reflecting tower'd Camelot.
 And as the mazy web she whirls,
 She sees the surly village churls, etc.

56. *pad.* ‘An easy paced horse’ (etymologically connected with *path*).

64. *still.* ‘Always,’ ‘ever.’

76. *greaves.* ‘Armor to protect the shins.’

82. *free.* The bridle was held with a slack hand.

84. *Galaxy.* The Milky Way (from Gk. γάλα γάλακ-ος, milk).

86. *to.* In ed. of 1832 “from”; so also l. 104.

87. *blazon'd.* ‘Ornamented with heraldic devices.’

baldric. ‘A belt worn over one shoulder and crossing the breast.’

91. **All.** Cf. Coleridge, *Ancient Mariner* :

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand, etc.

98. **bearded meteor.** The beard is, of course, what could be more prosaically described as the 'tail.'

99. **still.** In ed. of 1832, "green."

101. **hooves.** Archaic plural.

107. **by the river.** In ed. of 1832, "tirra lirra."

111. **water-lily.** In ed. of 1832, "water flower."

115. The mirror reflects both Lancelot on the bank, and his image in the water.

119. Note how throughout the poem, the season of the year and the weather are made to harmonize with the events of the story; the same device is adopted in the *Idylls of the King*; see p. 200 of this volume.

123-126. In the ed. of 1832—

Outside the isle a shallow boat
Beneath the willow lay afloat,
Below the carven stern she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

Then followed a stanza which has been omitted—

A cloudwhite crown of pearl she dight
All raimented in snowy white
That loosely flew (her zone in sight,
Clasped with one blinding diamond bright)
Her wide eyes fixed on Camelot.
Though the squally east wind keenly
Blew, with folded arms serenely
By the water stood she queenly
Lady of Shalott.

127. In the ed. of 1832—

With a steady stony glance—
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Beholding all his own mischance,
Mute, with glassy countenance—
She looked down to Camelot.
It was the closing, etc.

136. In the ed. of 1832—

As when to sailors while they roam,
By creeks and outfalls far from home,
Rising and dropping with the foam,
From dying swans wild warblings come,
Blown shoreward ; so to Camelot
Still as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her chanting her death song,
The Lady of Shalott.

145.

A long drawn carol, mournful, holy,
She chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her eyes were darkened wholly,
And her smooth face sharpened slowly, etc.

156. In 1832—

A pale, pale corpse she floated by,
Dead cold, between the houses high,
Dead into towered Camelot.
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
To the planked wharfage came :
Below the stern they read her name,
'The Lady of Shalott.'

They crossed themselves, their stars they blest,
Knight, minstrel, abbot, squire, and guest.
There lay a parchment on her breast,
That puzzled more than all the rest,
The well fed wits of Camelot.
'The web was woven curiously,
The charm is broken utterly,
Draw near and fear not—this is I
The Lady of Shalott.

It will be noted how great is the improvement made by the changes in the original version ; particularly the poem gains in unity by the omission of needless details, or of details not in perfect keeping with the general effect, *e.g.*: the stanza beginning 'As when to sailors,' etc.; the dwelling on unpleasing aspects of death (stanza next to the last), which mars the simple beauty and impressiveness of the appearance of the dead Lady ; above all, the introduction of Lancelot in the closing lines affords a wholly new and effective picture.

165. royal cheer. The gaiety at the banquet in the palace.

OENONE.

First printed in the volume of 1832; but, in parts, greatly altered and improved since. It is the first of the Tennysonian *Idylls* proper—a form imitating in general character and in style the works of Theocritus, a Greek poet of the Alexandrian period (see p. 205 of this volume and Stedman's *Victorian Poets*, chap. vi.). Further, it is an example of Tennyson's practice of infusing a modern spirit into a classical theme. The latter affords a picturesque framework with opportunities for beautiful details to charm the imaginative vision and gratify the æsthetic taste; the former gives elevation, and profounder interest and significance to the subject. In the present poem the combination is not so complete and successful as in some other poems (*Ulysses*, for example) being chiefly found in Athene's speech, but the theme is brought closer to the reader's sympathies by the pathetic interest of the situation.

1-29. In the ed. of 1832, the following is the reading:

There is a dale in Ida, lovelier
 Than any in old Ionia, beautiful
 With emerald slopes of sunny sward, that lean
 Above the loud glenriver, which hath worn
 A path thro' steepdown granite walls below
 Mantled with flowering tendriltwine. In front
 The cedar shadowy valleys open wide.
 Far seen, high over all the Godbuilt wall
 And many a snowycolumned range divine,
 Mounted with awful sculptures—men and Gods,
 The work of Gods—bright on a darkblue sky
 The windy citadel of Ilion
 Shone, like the crown of Troas. Hither came
 Mournful Oenone, wandering forlorn
 Of Paris, once her playmate. Round her neck,
 Her neck all marblewhite and marblecold,
 Floated her hair or seemed to float in rest.
 She, leaning on a vine-entwined stone,
 Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shadow
 Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

O mother Ida, manyfountained Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 The grasshopper is silent in the grass,
 The lizard with his shadow on the stone,
 Sleeps like a shadow, and the scarletwinged
 Cicala in the noonday leapeth not.
 Along the water-rounded granite-rock
 The purple flower droops: the golden bee, etc.

Mr. Stopford Brooke says (p. 87): "To compare the first draft of *On one* with the second, is not only to receive a useful lesson in the art of poetry—it is also to understand, far better than by any analysis of his life, a great part of Tennyson's character; his impatience for perfection, his steadiness in pursuit of it, his power of taking pains, the long intellectual consideration he gave to matters which originated in the emotions, his love of balancing this and that form of his thought against one another; and finally, correlative with these qualities, his want of impulse and rush in song, as in life." Mr. Brooke quotes (p. 113) the first thirteen lines of the 1832 version given above and remarks: "The blank verse halts; a hurly-burly of vowels like 'Than any in old Ionia' is a sorrowful thing; there is no careful composition of the picture; the things described have not that vital connection one with the other which should enable the imaginative eye to follow them step by step down the valley till it opens on the plain where Troy stands white, below its citadel." He then quotes the passage as it stands in the later editions, and comments: "The verse is now weighty and poised, and nobly paused—yet it moves swiftly enough. The landscape is now absolutely clear, and it is partly done by cautious additions to the original sketch. . . . Nothing can image better the actual thing than that phrase concerning a lonely peak at dawn, that 'it takes the morning'; nor the lifting and slow absorption of the mists of night when the sun slants warm into the pines of the glen, than those slow-wrought, concentrated lines about the mountain vapour."

1. This opening description is said to have been suggested by what the poet saw in the Pyrenees, which he visited in the autumn of 1831.

Ida. The mountain chain to the south of the district of Treas.

Ionian. Ionia was the name applied to a narrow strip of the coast of Asia Minor from the river Hermus, on the north, to the Meander, on the south.

3-5. Those who have seen the movements of mist on the mountains will appreciate the felicity of this description.

10. **topmost Gargarus.** The summit of Gargarus; a Latin idiom, cf. "summus mons." *Gargarus* is one of the highest peaks in Ida, some 5,000 feet above the sea.

11. **takes the morning.** 'Catches the first rays of the rising sun.'

13. **Ilion.** Troy.

15-16. **forlorn Of Paris.** Bereft of Paris; cf. *Par. Lost*, x., 921: "Forlorn of thee."

20. **fragment of rock** (see the corresponding line in the version of 1832).

21-22. Until the sun had sunk so low, that the shadow of the mountain reached the place where Oenone was sitting.

23-24. A refrain repeated at intervals through the poem, is a frequent peculiarity of Greek idylls; cf. Theocritus, i. and ii., Moschus, *Epitaph*; the same device is found in Spenser, *Prothalamium*, and Pope, *Pastorals*, iii., etc.

24. **many-fountain'd Ida**, an exact translation of Homer, *Iliad*, viii., 47: Ἰδῆν πολὺνπίδακα.

25. Tennyson is indebted for many hints to the Greek Idyllic poets (see Stedman's *Victorian Poets*). Line 25, translation of Callimachus' *Lacacrum Palladis*: μεσαμβρινὰ δ' εἶχ' ὕπρος ἀσπερία. (Collins' *Illustrations of Tennyson*.)

27. Cf. Theocritus, *Idyll* vii., 22: ἀνίκα δὲ καὶ σαῖρος ἐφ' αἰμασιῶσι καθέινδει (When, indeed, the lizard is sleeping on the wail of loose stones).

28-29. **and the winds are dead. The purple flower droops.** The earlier reading was "and the cicada sleeps. The purple flowers droop." This present reading was not introduced until 1884.

30. Cf. *Henry VI.*, Part II., ii. 3: "Mine eyes are full of tears, my heart of grief."

37. **cold crown'd snake.** Theocritus speaks of the *cold* snake; "crown'd" refers to its crest or hood. The resemblance of the crest to a crown is the probable origin of the name "basilisk," which is a diminutive formed from the Gk. word for 'king.'

38. **a River-God.** According to the myth, this river-god was Kebren (Κεβρήν).

40-42. According to the myth, the walls of Troy rose under the influence of Apollo's lyre (see Ovid, *Heroides*, xv., 179); cf. *Tithonus*,

Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Cf. also the building of Pandemonium in *Par. Lost*, i., 710.

51. **white-hooved.** The usual form would be "white-hoofed"; cf. 'hooves' for 'hoofs' in *Lady of Shalott*, 101.

52. **Simois.** One of the rivers of Troas.

53-127. Originally this passage read:

"O mother Ida, hearken ere I die,
 I sate alone : the golden-sundall'd morn
 Rosched the scornful hills : I sate alone
 With downdropt eyes : whitebreasted like a star
 Fronting the dawn he came : a leopard skin
 From his white shoulder drooped : his sunny hair
 Clustered about his temples like a God's :
 And his cheek brightened, as the rainbow brightens
 When the wind blows the foam : and I called out,
 "Welcome, Apollo, welcome home, Apollo,
 Apollo, my Apollo, loved Apollo."

"Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die,
 He, mildly smiling, in his milkwhite palm
 Close-held a golden apple, lightningbright
 With changeful flashes, dropt with dew of Heaven
 Amorsually smelling. From his lip,
 Curved crimson, the fullflowing river of speech
 Came down upon my heart.

"My own CEnone,
 Beautifulbrowed CEnone, mine own soul,
 Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n
 'For the most fair' in aftertime may breed
 Deep evilwilloress of heaven and sere
 Heartburning toward hallowed Ilion :
 And all the colour of my afterlife
 Will be the shadow of today. Today
 Here and Pallas and the floating grace
 Of laughterloving Aphrodite meet
 In manyfolded Ids to receive
 This meed of beauty, she to whom my hand
 Award the palm. Within the green hillside,
 Under yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
 Is an ingoing grotto, strown with spar
 And ivymatted at the mouth, wherein
 Thou un beholden may'st behold, unheard
 Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods."

"Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 It was the deep midnight : one silvery cloud
 Had lost his way between the piney hills.
 They came — all three — the Olympian Goddesses :
 Naked they came to the smoothwarded bower,
 Lustrous with lilyflower, violeteyed
 Both white and blue, with lotetree-fruit thickset
 Shadowed with singing pine : and all the while,
 Above, the overwandering ivy and vine,
 This way and that in many a wild festoon
 Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs

With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.
 On the treetops a golden glorious cloud
 Leaned, slowly dropping down ambrosial dew.
 How beautiful they were, too beautiful
 To look upon ! but Paris was to me
 More lovelier than all the world beside.

“ ‘O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 First spake the imperial Olympian
 With arched eyebrow smiling sovrantly,
 Fulleyed Here. She to Paris made
 Proffer of royal power, ample rule
 Unquestioned, overflowing revenue
 Wherewith to embellish state “from many a vale
 And riversundered champaign clothed with corn,
 Or upland glebe wealthy in oil and wine —
 Honour and homage, tribute, tax and toll,
 From many an inland town and haven large,
 Mast-thronged below her shadowing citadel
 In glassy bays among her tallest towers.”

“ ‘O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Still she spake on and still she spake of power
 “ Which in all action is the end of all.
 Power fitted to the season, measured by
 The height of the general feeling, wisdomborn
 And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
 Alliance and allegiance evermore.
 Such boon from me Heaven’s Queen to thee kingborn,” etc.

48. **lawn.** Cf. note on Gray’s *Elegy*, l. 100.

55. **solitary morning.** Refers to the remoteness and aloofness of the first rays of direct light from the sun.

57. The light of a star becomes pale and white in the dawn. Cf. *The Princess*, iii., 1 : “morn in the white wake of the morning star,” and *Marriage of Geraint*, 734 : “the white and glittering star of morn.”

61-62. The wind carries the spray into the air, and the increased number of watery particles which break up the rays of light, intensify the colour. To such rainbows, Tennyson refers in *Sea-Fairies*, and in *Princess*, v., 308 :

This flake of rainbow flying on the highest
 Foam of men’s deeds.

66. In the fabulous gardens of the Hesperides at the western limit of the world were certain famous golden apples, which it was one of the labours of Hercules to obtain.

67. **Ambrosia** was the food of the Greek gods.

74. **whatever Oread haunt.** Imitation of a classical construction = 'any Oread that haunts.' *Oread* means 'mountain-nymph.'

76. **married brows.** "Eyebrows that meet," considered a great beauty by the Greeks. (Cf. Theocritus, *Idyll* viii., 72: *σύνωπρος κόρη* ('the maid of the meeting eyebrows').)

80. **full-faced**, according to Rowe and Webb, "'not a face being absent,' or perhaps also in allusion to the majestic brows of the Gods." But the reference seems rather to be to the fact that the apple was cast *full in the face of all the Gods*. The picture presented by the words "When all—Peleus" is that of the Olympian gods facing the spectator in a long row.

81. **Ranged** = 'were placed in order.' Cf. *Princess*, iii., 101-2 :

and gained

The terrace ranged along the northern front.

84. **Delivering.** For this use of the word compare *Richard II.*, iii., 3 :

Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parle
Into his ruin'd ears, and thus deliver, etc.

95-98. Suggested doubtless by *Iliad*, xiv., 347-9 :

τοῖσι δ' ἐπὶ χθών δ' ἴα φέρον νεοθλήα ποιην
λατόν θ' ἔρσηντα ἰδὲ κρόκον ἥδ' ὑάκινθον
πυκνόν καὶ μαλακόν.

(And beneath them the divine earth caused to spring up fresh new grass, and dewy lotus, and crocus, and hyacinth thick and soft').

Cf. also *Par. Lost*, iv., 716, fol.

96. Cf. *In Memoriam*, lxxxiii.: "Laburnums, dropping wells of fire."

97. **amaracus, and asphodel.** Greek names of flowers; the former identified by some with sweet marjoram, the latter is a species of lily. In *Odyssey* ii., 539, the shades of the heroes are represented as haunting an asphodel meadow.

104. The crested peacock was sacred to Here (Juno).

105-106. Cf. *Iliad*, xiv., 350-351 :—

ἐπὶ δὲ νεφέλην ἕσαντο
καλὴν χρυσεῖην στιλπναὶ δ' ἀπέπιπτον ἕρσαι

(And they were clothed over with a cloud beauteous, golden; and from it kept falling glittering dew-drops').

124. **throned of wisdom.** ‘Power which has been attained, and is maintained by wisdom.’

128. Paris was the son of Priam, King of Troy ; but as a dream of his mother, Hecuba, indicated that the child was to bring misfortune to the city, he was exposed on Mount Ida, where he was found by a shepherd, who brought the boy up as his own son.

131. Cf. *Lucretius*, iii., 18, and the conclusion of *The Lotos-Eaters*.

137. **Flatter'd his spirit.** ‘Charmed his spirit’ ; cf. *Maud*, xiv., iii. : “The fancy flatter'd my mind.”

139-140. ‘With the spear athwart, or across, her shoulders.’

144-150. The sentiment of these five lines is characteristic of Tennyson and his work. He is the poet of self-control, moderation, duty, law, as his work is the manifestation of these very qualities ; in these respects both his theory and practice are the very opposite of some of the most poetical natures,—of Shelley, for example, with his ardour and passion. See pp. 211-2 of this volume ; also Dowden's *Studies in Literature* for a contrast between Tennyson and Browning in this regard.

144-167. In the edition of 1832, Pallas' speech read as follows :—

“Selfreverence, selfknowledge, selfcontrol
Are the three hinges of the gates of Life,
That open into power, every way
Without horizon, bound or shadow or cloud.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Will come uncalled for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear,
And because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom, in the scorn of consequence.
(Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.)
Not as men value gold because it tricks
And blazons outward life with ornament,
But rather as the miser, for itself.
Good for selfgood doth half destroy selfgood.
The means and end, like two coiled snakes, infect
Each other, bound in one with hateful love.
So both into the fountain and the stream
A drop of poison falls. Come hearken to me,
And look upon me and consider me,
So shalt thou find me fairest, so endurance
Like to an athlete's arm, shall still become
Sinew'd with motion, till thine active will

(As the dark body of the Sun robed round
 With his own ever emanating lights)
 Be flooded o'er with her own effluences,
 And thereby grown to freedom."

144, fol. 41. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, ll. 201, fol.

153. **Sequel of guerdon.** 'A reward to follow,' 'the addition of a reward.'

161-165. **grow Sinew'd with.** 'Become strengthened by.'

165-167. 'The mature will, having passed through all kinds of experience, and having come to be identical with law (or duty) is commensurate with perfect freedom.' To the truly disciplined will, obedience to law or duty is perfect freedom, because that is all that the perfected will desires; cf. the phrase in the Collect for Peace in the *Book of Common Prayer*, "O God . . . whose service is perfect freedom."

171. There is of course a play on the two senses of "hear," 'to apprehend by the ears' and 'to give heed to.'

172-182. In the edition of 1832 this passage read:--

"Idalian Aphrodite oceanborn,
 Fresh as the foam, new-lashed in Paphian wells,
 With rosy slender fingers upward drew
 From her warm brow and bosom her dark hair
 Fragrant and thick, and on her head upboud
 In a purple band; below her lucid neck
 Shone ivorylike, and from the ground her foot
 Gleamed rosywhite, and o'er her rounded form
 Between the shadows of the vinebunches
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved."

174. **Idalian.** So called from Idalium, a mountain city in Cyprus, reputed to be one of her favourite haunts.

175. According to the myth, Aphrodite was born of the foam of the sea. *Paphos* was a city in Cyprus where she first landed after her birth from the waves.

178: **Ambrosial.** The epithet is often applied by Homer to the hair of the gods, and to other things belonging to them. It may refer here to the fragrance of the hair.

187. This was Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Lacedaemon. Paris subsequently carried her off, and this was the cause of the Trojan war, and the destruction of Troy itself.

189-191. In the ed. of 1832:—

I only saw my Paris raise his arm
I only saw great Here's angry eyes.

208. In order to build ships for Paris' expedition to Greece, where he was to carry off Helen.

219. trembling. Refers to the *twinkling* of the stars.

222. fragments. Cf. on l. 20 above.

224. The Abominable. Eris, the goddess of strife.

245-50. She has vague premonitions of the evils to befall the city of Troy in consequence of Paris' winning the fairest wife in Greece.

258. their refers to Paris and Helen.

263. Cassandra, daughter of Priam, upon whom Apollo bestowed the gift of prophecy, with the drawback that her prophecies should never be believed. Accordingly, when she prophesied the siege and destruction of Troy, they shut her up in prison as a mad woman.

264. A fire dances before her. In Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1256, Cassandra exclaims: *παῖται, ὄνόν τε πῖρ ἐπέρχεται δέ μοι* ('Ah me, the fire, how it comes upon me now').

THE LOTOS-EATERS.

First published among the poems of 1832; in the edition of 1842 important changes were made. The germ of the poem is contained in a few lines of the *Odyssey*, ix., 82, fol.—“But on the tenth day we set foot on the land of the Lotos-eaters, who feed on food of flowers. . . . I sent forward ship mates to go and ask what manner of men they might be who lived in the land by bread, having picked out two men, and sent a third with them to be a herald. And they went their way forthwith and mixed with the Lotos-eaters; so the Lotos-eaters plotted not harm to our ship mates, but gave them of lotos to eat. But whoever of them ate the honey-sweet fruit of the lotos, no longer was he willing to bring back tidings or to come back; but there they wished to abide, feeding on the lotos with the lotos-eaters, and all forgetful of home.”

In this passage the poet found the situation, and the suggestion of languor, of indifference to active life and the ties of affection. This germ the poet has immensely developed with the help of hints from the

Greek idyllic poets, and from Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*. Further, he creates a charming landscape in harmony with, and lending emphasis to, the mood of the central human figures. The poem is largely descriptive, but the description is not intended merely to bring pictures before the mental vision, but to express a human mood and experience (see p. 204); this gives an interest and elevation which are absent from mere material descriptions which are apt soon to weary.

The opening part of the poem is written in Spenserian stanza; large compass and slow musical movement of this stanza fit it especially for detailed description. The same form is employed in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, and the following passages have been pointed out by Mr. Churton Collins as especially likely to have given suggestions for *The Lotus-Eaters*.

Was nought around but images of rest;
Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between;
And flowery beds that slumbrous influence kest,
From poppies breath'd; and beds of pleasant green
Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
Meantime unnumber'd glittering streamlets play'd,
And hurled everywhere their waters sheen;
That, as they bickered through the sunny glade,
Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.

A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
Forever flushing round a summer sky.

Lotus was a name applied to several different species of plants; it is supposed that the species referred to in the story of the *Odyssey* is the *Zizyphus Lotus*, a low thorny shrub bearing fruit about the size of a sloe, with sweet farinaceous pulp. Herodotus at least seems (iv., 177) to identify the Lotus of the *Odyssey* with this plant.

1. **he said.** The leader of the band, *i.e.* Ulysses.

5. **swoon** refers to the dull, languid character of the air.

7. In 1832 this line read: "Above the valley burned the golden moon."

9. The movement of the verse with its three marked pauses and "the length and soft amplitude of the vowel sounds with liquid consonants," as Mr. Roden Noel remarks, happily echoes the sense. Cf. Milton's:

From morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve
A summer's day.

11. Tennyson, in a letter to Mr. Dawson (quoted in the preface to *A Study of "The Princess"*) says: "When I was about twenty or twenty-one I went on a tour to the Pyrenees. Lying among these mountains before a waterfall that comes down one thousand or twelve hundred feet, I sketched it (according to my custom then) in these words:—

‘Slow dropping veils of thinnest lawn.’

When I printed this, a critic informed me that ‘lawn’ was the material used in theatres to imitate a waterfall and graciously added, ‘Mr. T. should not go to the boards of a theatre but to Nature herself for his suggestions.’—And I *had* gone to Nature herself.”

Mr. Libby remarks: “Our river Rideau (curtain) was so-called by some one who had made an observation similar to Tennyson’s.”

16. In edition of 1832: “Three thunder-cloven thrones of oldest snow.”

16. **aged snow.** Snow that had lain unmelted for ages.

18. **Up-clomb.** Cf. p. 202 of this volume.

19. The sunset seemed to linger as if charmed by the beautiful scene which it was leaving.

21. **yellow down.** *Downs* are rolling hills (see note on *Lady of Shalott*, l. 3). It has been suggested that the downs are *yellow* because of the evening light, but in that case the mountains would be yellow also, whereas, the colour seems to mark out the ‘down’ from the rest of the landscape; further, ll. 15-18 seem to show that the sun was so low as only to touch the *tops* of the mountains. The *down* is probably, therefore, yellow from the character of the vegetation upon it, perhaps covered with the yellow-flowered lotus.

23. **galingale.** “Generally used of *Cyperus Longus*, one of the sedges; but the Papyrus species is here intended” (Palgrave). The papyrus is a sedge, growing in still pools, rising some 8 or 10 feet above the water, bearing on the summit of the leafless stem “a compound umbel of extremely numerous drooping spikelets with a general involucre of eight tiny filiform leaves.”

26. **rosy flame** of sunset.

31-33. The sea sounded to their ears as if breaking on some remote and unknown shore.

34. The voices of the dead were supposed to be shrill and weak ; so Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi., 492, speaks of their voices as *exiguam vocem*, so Theocritus, xiii., 59. Shakespeare (*Hamlet* I. 1) says : "the sheeted dead Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets."

38. The sun was setting in the west, the moon rising in the east (see l. 7).

CHORIC SONG.

The narrative stanza of Spenser is now changed to the varied metre of a choral ode, to suit the varying feelings to which lyric expression is to be given. The theme is the folly of struggle with the difficulties of life—let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die. The same theme had already been treated in similar verse by Tennyson in *The Sea-Fairies* of 1830.

49. **gleaming** refers, according to Rowe and Webb, to the reflections of light from particles of mica, quartz, etc., in the granite ; but, doubtless, as Mr. Sykes notes, the reference is to the reflections of the light of the sky upon the water.

51. Rolfe prints "tired" in both places in this line and observes : "All the eds. print 'tir'd' in both places contrary to Tennyson's rule not to use the apostrophe when the verb ends in *e*." But Tennyson, no doubt, used the apostrophe to prevent mistakes. "Tir'd" of course represents two syllables in the line, but the effect is obtained by dwelling on the *ir* : to pronounce *tiréd* injures the sound effect.

53-56. Note the effect produced through lengthening each successive line by one metrical foot.

56. The narcotic properties of the poppy (from one species opium is made) associate it with sleep.

57. The whole of this choric song is full of touches which resemble and may have been suggested by the pastoral poets ; many of these parallels may be found in Collins and Stedman ; in some cases the resemblance is very close, *e.g.*, compare this stanza with the following from Bion, *Idyll* v., 11-15 :

εις πόσον ἂν δειλοὶ καμύτως κ' εἰς ἔργα πονέμεναι :
 ψυχὰν δ' ἄχρει τιος ποτὶ κερδεᾷ καὶ ποτὶ τεχνᾷ
 βάλλομεν, ἡμειρόντες αἰὲ πολὺ πλὴνους ὀλβῷ ;
 λαθομεθ' ἢ ἄρα πάντες ὅτι θνατοὶ γενόμεσθα
 χάς βραχὺν ἐκ Μοίρας λάχομεν χρόνον

translated by Lang: "Wretched men and weary that we are, how sorely we toil, how greatly we cast our souls away on gain, and laborious arts, continually coveting yet more wealth ! Surely we have all forgotten that we are men condemned to die, and how short is the hour, that to us is allotted by Fate."

66. **slumber's holy balm.** Macbeth (Act ii., 1) speaks of "the innocent sleep balm of hurt minds."

73. Cf. *Matthæw*, vi., vv. 25 fol.

84. Mr. Collins compares *Aen.* iv., 451 : taedet coeli convexa tueri. (It is a weariness to behold the vault of heaven).

94, fol. Mr. Collins compares Moschus, *Idyll*, v. :

ἦ κακὸν ὁ γριπεὺς ζῶει βίον, ὃ δόμος ἂν ναῦς
 καὶ πόνος ἐστὶ θάλασσα
 αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γλυκεὺς ἵππος ὑπὸ πλατᾶνα βαθυφύλλῳ,
 καὶ παγὰς φιλέοιμι τὸν ἐγγύθεν ἦχον ἀκούειν
 ἃ τέρπει ψοφέοισα τὸν ἄγριον ὄνυχ' ἀτάσσει

translated by Lang: "Surely an evil life lives the fisherman, whose home is his ship, and his labours are in the sea. . . . Nay, sweet to me is sleep beneath the broad-leaved plane-tree ; let me love to listen to the murmur of the brook hard by, soothing, not troubling, the husbandman with his sound."

95. Mr. Collins compares *Aen.* i., 381 : conscendi navibus aequor, and *Othello*, ii., 1 : "And let the labouring barque climb hills of seas."

102. **amber light.** See l. 19.

106. **crisping ripples.** "Wavelets that curl at the edges. Cf. *Claribel*, 'The babbling runnel crispeth.' Milton has 'crisped brooks' in *Par. Lost*, iv." (Rowe and Webb).

106-7. These two lines exemplify Tennyson's power of presenting the minuter phenomena of nature in picturesque phrase.

109. **mild-minded melancholy.** This phrase had been already employed by Tennyson in a suppressed sonnet of his, printed in the *Englishman's Magazine* for August, 1831.

141. This stanza was added in the edition of 1842; note that it introduces one of the most human touches in the poem.

148. **inherit us.** 'Have succeeded to our possessions.'

120. **island princes,** etc. 'The princes of Ithaca and the neighbouring islands, which were their homes.' The state of things represented in ll. 120-123 did, according to the *Odyssey*, exist in Ithaca.

133. In the ed. of 1832 this line read: "O propt on lavish beds," etc.

amaranth. A fabulous flower which (as the etymology indicates) never faded, so Milton speaks of "immortal amaranth," *Par. Lost*, iii., 353.

moly. Another fabulous plant with magic virtues, given by Hermes to Ulysses as a counter-charm to the draught of Circe. Cf. *Odys.* x., 305, and Milton, *Comus*, 636.

134. **lowly** is used as if the adverbial form from "low," as in *The Lady of Shalott*, 146.

136. **dark and holy.** "Shaded with clouds and wrapt in religious calm" (Rowe and Webb). But the suggestion of 'clouds' seems out of keeping with the context. The darkness is rather that of the "dark-blue sky" (l. 84) contrasted with the brightness of the landscape (l. 137).

139. **dewy echoes.** The epithet is vague but suggestive, after the manner of Keats; dewy cannot properly be applied to echoes; it seems to suggest the sound of waterfalls dashing into spray.

141. **watch.** Originally "hear."

142. **wov'n acanthus-wreath divine.** 'Through the masses of acanthus foliage.' *Acanthus*, a plant with graceful pendant leaves whose form is familiar to us in the capital of Corinthian columns. *Divine* presumably 'divinely beautiful.' Cf. *Madeline*, ii., "Light glooming over eyes divine."

145. **barren.** Originally read "flowery."

148. **alley.** Milton also uses "alley" of the natural passages in the woods in *Comus*, 311.

149. **the yellow Lotos-dust.** 'The pollen of the Lotos flowers.'

149. Note the metrical effect produced by beginning the lines with the stressed syllable; this gives an animation in keeping with a change of tone in the singers, who now make up their minds as to their course.

150. The whole passage from this line to the end was re-written and greatly improved in 1842. Originally it stood :

“ We have had enough of motion,
 Weariness and wild alarm,
 Tossing on the tossing ocean,
 Where the tusked seahorse walloweth
 In a stripe of grassgreen calm,
 At noon tide beneath the lea ;
 And the monstrous narwhale swalloweth
 His foamfountains in the sea,
 Long enough the winedark wave our weary bark did carry.
 This is lovelier and sweeter,
 Men of Ithaca, this is meeter,
 In the hollow rosy vale to tarry,
 Like a dreamy Lotos-eater, a delirious Lotos-eater !
 We will eat the Lotos, sweet
 As the yellow honeycomb,
 In the valley some, and some
 On the ancient heights divine ;
 And no more roam,
 On the loud hoar foam,
 To the melancholy home
 At the limit of the brine,
 The little isle of Ithaca, beneath the day's decline.
 We'll lift no more the shattered oar,
 No more unfurl the straining sail ;
 With the blissful Lotos-eaters pale
 We will abide in the golden vale
 Of the Lotos-land, till the Lotos fail ;
 We will not wander more.
 Hark ! how sweet the horned ewes bleat
 On the solitary steeps,
 And the merry lizard leaps,
 And the foamwhite waters pour ;
 And the dark pine weeps,
 And the lithe vine creeps,
 And the heavy melon sleeps
 On the level of the shore :
 Oh ! islanders of Ithaca, we will not wander more.
 Surely, surely slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
 Than labour in the ocean, and rowing with the oar.
 Oh ! islanders of Ithaca, we will return no more.”

In regard to this change Mr. Stopford Brooke says (*Tennyson: His Art and Relation to Modern Life*, p. 123): “ Instead of the jingling, unintellectual, merely fanciful ending of the poem of 1833, every image of which wanders hither and thither without clear purpose and weakens the impression of the previous part, the poem thus closing in a feeble

anti-climax, we have the weighty, solemn, thoughtful, classic close, embodying the Epicurean conception of the Gods, bringing all Olympus down into harmony with the indifferent dreaming of the Letos-eaters, but leaving in our minds the sense of a dreadful woe tending on those who dream; for what the gods do with impunity, man may not do. Yet, even the Letos-eating Gods inevitable fate awaits. This is the work of a great artist, and in this steady improvement of his poems Tennyson stands almost alone. Other poets, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, did not recast their poems in this wholesale fashion, and the additions and changes which they made were by no means always improvements. Tennyson, working with his clear sense of what was artistic, and with the stately stolidness which belonged to his character, not only improved but doubled the value of the poems he altered."

152. **the wallowing monster**, etc. The whale would answer to the description (see l. 7 of the passage quoted on l. 150).

153. **equal mind**. A classic phrase; cf. Horace, *Od.*, ii., 3,

aquam memento rebus in arduis
servare mentem.

154. **hollow**. 'Consisting of a valley,' or 'full of valleys'; cf. opening description.

155. **fol**. The calmness and indifference of the Gods was a notion of the Epicureans and is depicted by Lucretius, *De Rec. Nat.*, iii., 15 **fol**. (see note on *Morte d'Arthur*, l. 260); another parallel to this passage is cited from Goethe, *Iph. auf Tauris*, iv.

156. **nectar and ambrosia** was the proper diet of the Olympian divinities.

158. **golden houses**. "The epithet 'golden' is often used by Homer of the gods and all their belongings" (Rowe and Webb).

164. So Macbeth (Act v., sc. 1) calls life "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

167. **little dues**. The small returns which they get from sowing the seed, etc.

168. **hell**. 'Hades' where Greek story represents Ixion, Tantalus, etc., suffering endless torments.

169. **Elysian valleys**. *Elysium* or the Elysian fields is described in

Homer as the habitation of heroes after death—the Greek heaven (see *Ody.*, iv., 563).

170. **asphodel.** See note on *Oenone*, l. 95.

‘YOU ASK ME WHY, THO’ ILL AT EASE.’

This and the two following pieces were first published in 1842, but we are told that they were written in 1833. The poem before us exhibits the poet’s pride in his country, and in that steady development of her political institutions—that combined conservatism and progress—which distinguishes her history. Tennyson’s satisfaction, upon the whole, with his country may be contrasted with the bitter attacks of Byron and Shelley on the social and political condition of England in their day. The difference in Tennyson’s attitude is mainly due to his character and temperament, but partly to the change in the general tone and condition of the country since the close of the era of repression which had existed during the Napoleonic wars, and during the time when the opinions of Byron and Shelley were maturing.

2. **this region.** England. There is a reference to its misty climate in the following line, as compared with the more brilliant atmosphere of “the South.”

6. **sober-suited Freedom.** Not a showy freedom since it does not exhibit itself in institutions strikingly democratic; the English constitution may not commend itself to those who seek for external forms markedly popular, but it contains the substance of freedom.

11. Originally this line read “broadens slowly.”

11-12. English history is full of examples of this, both in politics and law. Compare Macaulay’s famous comments on the Revolution of 1688 towards the close of chap. x. of his *History*.

19. ‘When freedom of opinion in the individual is considered a crime against society.’

23-24. As the first two lines of the stanza refer to increase in power, so these to increase in wealth.

24. The line read originally “should almost choke.”

‘OF OLD SAT FREEDOM ON THE HEIGHTS.’

1-4. Of old, freedom was not actually realized in human society, but existed as an ideal out of the reach of man ; so the poet represents her as dwelling on the heights amidst the unfettered play of the great forces of nature ; cf. the close of Coleridge’s *France*, where the poet finds Liberty, not among men, but in nature, “The guide of homeless winds and playmate of the waves.”

6. ‘Self-contained and prepared for that future growth of liberty which she foresees.’

7-8. ‘Earlier men had some partial perception and experience of freedom.’

14. *isle-altar*. Britain.

15-16. The poet has in mind, perhaps, the common representation of Britannia with the trident in her hand to symbolize the dominion of the sea. The trident is the symbol of Neptune, hence “God-like.” Cf. also the common representation of Jove with the triple thunder-bolt in his hands, *e.g.*, Ovid, *Metamor.*, ii., 848 :

Ille pater restorque deum, cui dextra trisulcis
Ignibus armata est, qui nutu concutit orbem.

‘LOVE THOU THY LAND, WITH LOVE FAR-BROUGHT.’

This poem is an expansion of the concluding lines immediately preceding. It was written soon after the passing of the first Reform Bill—a time of hopefulness, for the extreme tension had been relieved by a bloodless revolution—a time of anxiety for moderate thinkers, as initiating, perhaps, a too rapid transfer of power to the hands of an ignorant democracy.

3-4. *but transfused*, etc. ‘The true patriot will take thought for the possibilities of future development.’ Cf. lines 15 and 16 of the preceding poem.

14. *the ray*. ‘The ray of knowledge’—as indicated by next stanza.

17-20. Cf. the Prologue to *In Memoriam* :

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell.

and the whole of No. cxiv. in the same poem (which may be found in the *Appendix* to this volume).

19. **sky.** 'Climate,' 'region.' 'Sky' is the subject of the subjunctive "bear" in the next line.

22-24. 'Do not compromise at all with your own prejudices, but in the treatment of what may seem the prejudices of others, be more considerate.'

26-27. **neither count on praise,** etc. The highest work is not wont to win immediate fame; that comes later when time has tested what is really praiseworthy: cf. *Luke*, xi., 48: "Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them."

28. **watch-words.** Phrases which embody some prevalent idea, as "The brotherhood of man," "The unity of the empire." Lines 29 and 30 are an expansion of line 28. The poet means that we should not allow our judgment to be blinded by enthusiasm for some specious and widely accepted generalization.

33. **That** is a relative pronoun referring to "law." A good law will be the result of discussions which will have exposed all its aspects; it will, in consequence, represent and serve to bind together the interests of various classes; and, as corresponding to felt needs, will be a living and effective force, not a mere dead letter on the statute-book.

36. **close.** 'Include'; cf. *To the Queen*:

A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her as Mother, Wife, and Queen.

37. **cold and warm,** etc. There is a reference to the old idea of nature being composed of four elements. Cf. Milton's description of Chaos, *Par. Lost*, II., 892:

For hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions fierce
Strive here for mastery, and to battle bring
Their embryon atoms.

45-48. 'The new must adjust itself to that which is passing away' ("that which flies"). There seems to be awkwardness and incongruity in the expression of this stanza.

50-52. The realization of new ideas in practice has usually been accompanied with violence.

61. 'The forms of government which are to preside over future developments.'

67-68. The image is that of a hurricane carried over the face of the earth accompanied by Discord.

69. 'This storm of violence will hasten the destruction of the institutions which you have idolized.'

74. 'In these later years of the world's history, as well as in former times.'

87. Cf. *Matthew*, x., 34: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword."

94. 'As we profit by those who have gone before.'

95. **Earn well the thrifty months.** 'Deserve well the months during which something may be laid up for the future.' But perhaps the poet uses "earn" with something of the sense of "harvest"; in provincial English, it is said to have the sense 'glean,' and is etymologically connected with Ger. "ernte," meaning 'harvest'.

THE EPIC

AND THE EPILOGUE (ll. 273-303)*.

The lines under *The Epic* were written by the poet (and are included in these Selections) merely as an introduction to the *Morte d'Arthur*. The abrupt opening and fragmentary character of the latter poem seemed to need an explanation, just as certain peculiarities of the story of *The Princess* require an explanation, and in both cases Tennyson makes use of a setting—a prologue and epilogue. Lines 27-28 need not be taken as literally true of Tennyson; it is extremely unlikely that he had written twelve books on the story of Arthur, but they do indicate that *Morte d'Arthur* is only portion of a larger scheme which was subsequently realized in *Idylls of the King*. Mrs. Ritchie quotes Tennyson as saying: "When I was twenty-four, I meant to write a whole great poem on it (the Arthurian story), and began it in the *Morte d'Arthur*. I said I should do it in twenty years but the reviews stopped me. By Arthur I always meant the soul, and by the Round Table the passions and

* Neither *The Epic* nor the epilogue are included in the work prescribed for examination.

capacities of man. There is no grander subject in the world than King Arthur." Here the poet, besides telling that, when he wrote *Morte d'Arthur*, he had the larger scheme in his mind, also asserts the symbolic nature of the poem; and this is a point to which *The Epic* and epilogue before us draw attention. The imaginary audience in *The Epic* are interested in the most modern questions, 'geology and schism,' etc., and old things are passing away. This is true also of Tennyson's real audience and the real world. To such an audience the poet comes with a story from old 'heroic times,' fashioned after the manner of the father of poetry, Homer; what interest can it have for them? The answer is hinted at, in the epilogue (276, fol.); Tennyson insinuates (modesty forbids him to put his claim openly): first, that there is perhaps a certain charm in the style (a charm which every reader will grant); second, that there is something of modern thought in the poem—it is not a mere description of external events as Homer's account would have been, but contains something of a deeper significance. In the dream (288, fol.) Tennyson gives a further hint that some, at least, of these "modern touches" are conveyed through symbolism. Arthur according to the old story was to come again; he did not really die. The poet seizes upon this to point the moral of his tale, which is contained in lines 240-241:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways.

His hearers say the old honour is gone from Christmas (*The Epic*, l. 7), there is a general decay in faith (l. 18); the poet substantially answers: "Not so, your decay is not real decay, but change, development. The old ideals pass away, but only to give place to higher ones; the old English ideal, King Arthur, has gone, but reappears in nobler form—the 'modern gentleman'; and so we can confidently anticipate in future generations (297, fol.) a continual progress to perfection." *The Epic* opens with the lament that Christmas is gone, but the Epilogue closes with the ringing of bells that announce that Christmas still exists; old customs connected with it may indeed be passing away, but the real essence of the Christmas festival still abides. One may compare the well-known lyric from *In Memoriam*, "Ring out wild bells" (cvi.):

Ring out a slowly dying cause
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
 Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
 Ring out the thousand wars of old,
 Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
 The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;
 Ring out the darkness of the land,
 Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Morte d'Arthur therefore represents some of the most characteristic aspects of the poet's thought (as well as the most characteristic beauties of his style)—his faith in human progress, his belief in development,—in a slow and steady development in which the old does not pass away, but reshapes itself to new forms in accordance with new conditions.

MORTE D'ARTHUR.

This poem was first published in the volumes of 1842 ; it was probably written some years earlier, and, as we may conclude from the poet's usual practice, slowly amended and polished. It is practically certain that this poem is referred to by W. S. Landor when he writes on Dec. 9th, 1837 : " Yesterday a Mr. Moreton, a young man of rare judgment, read to me a manuscript by Mr. Tennyson, very different in style from his printed poems. The subject is the death of Arthur. It is more Homeric than any poem of our time and rivals some of the noblest parts of the *Odyssæa*."

In 1869, when the greater number of *The Idylls of the King* had been written, Tennyson took this poem out of its setting, prefixed 169 lines, and added 30 at the close, in order to fit it to be the conclusion of the series of *Idylls of the King* ; in this shape it is entitled *The Passing of Arthur*. The added lines serve to make the connection with the other idylls closer, and to bring out the symbolic meaning, which in the earlier form had not, in the body of the poem, been very prominent ; indeed, *Morte d'Arthur* may, according to the feelings of some readers at least, be best enjoyed without thought of symbolism. The style of the *Morte d'Arthur* is unlike, and (in the present editor's opinion) superior, to that of the other idylls—the blank verse more stately, and less familiar in its rhythms, the style more terse and restrained. Apart from particular imitations of phrase and turns of

expression, the Homeric quality lies in the dignified flow of the verse, in the terseness and clearness yet impressiveness of the style, and, to some degree, in the nature of the theme; but Mr. Brimley is undoubtedly right when he says: "They are rather Virgilian than Homeric echoes; elaborate and stately, not naive and eager to tell the story; rich in pictorial detail; carefully studied; conscious of their own art; more anxious for beauty of workmanship than interest of action" (Brimley's *Essays*, p. 34). In this poem and in *Ulysses*, Tennyson's blank verse is at its best. Tennyson is one of the most successful employers of narrative blank verse. The great model in this species had been Milton; but his long and resonant periods, his rhythm attained largely by the use of sonorous polysyllables, were little suited to the treatment of themes less grand than his own. Accordingly, the poets of the 18th century who used blank verse in narrative, were constantly falling into pompous rhetoric, or into homely and unrhythmical lines differing little from prose. Tennyson, making use of some models he found in Keats, developed a blank verse of his own, in which by a careful adjustment of the pauses within the lines, an avoidance of *diacresis* (i.e., the coincidence of word endings, with foot-endings), etc., he attained smoothly-flowing verses without the use of polysyllables, and a periodic rhythm less prolonged and involved than Milton's.

The source of *Morte d'Arthur* is Sir Thomas Malory's version of the Arthurian legends—a book entitled *Morte d'Arthur*, written about 1570. The original is followed with remarkable closeness in parts, and the comparison is so interesting that we quote the whole (viz., chap. v. of Bk. xxi.) :—

Ah, Sir Launcelot, said king Arthur, this day have I sore missed thee. Alas, that ever I was against thee, for now have I my death, whereof Sir Gawaine me warned in my dream. Then Sir Luean took up the king the one part, and Sir Bedivere the other part, and in the lifting, the king swooned, and Sir Luean fell in a swoon with the lift, that the part of his bowels fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight's heart brast. And when king Arthur came to himself again, he beheld Sir Luean how he lay foaming at the mouth, and part of his bowels lay at his feet. Alas, said the king, this is unto me a full heavy sight to see this noble duke so die for my sake, for he would have holpen me that had more need of help than I. Alas, he would not complain him, his heart was so set to help me. Now Jesu have mercy upon his soul. Then Sir Bedivere wept for the death of his brother. Leave this mourning and weeping, said the king, for all this will not avail me: for, wit thou well, and I might live myself, the death of Sir Luean would grieve me evermore; but my time hieth fast, said the king. Therefore, said Arthur, take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again, and tell me what thou there seest. My lord, said Bedivere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again. So Sir Bedivere

departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and hilt were all of precious stones, and then he said to himself, If I throw this rich sword in the water, the reef shall never come good, but harm and loss. And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree. And as soon as he might he came again unto the king, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword into the water. What sawest thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but waves and winds. That is truly said of thee, said the king; therefore go thou lightly again, and do my command as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in. Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the sword in his hand; and then him thought sin and shame to throw away that noble sword; and so oft he hid the sword, and returned again, and told to the king that he had been at the water, and done his commandment. What saw thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but the waters wap and the waves wan. Ah traitor, untrue, said king Arthur, now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have wend that thou that hast been to me so lief and dear, and thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the riches of the sword. But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands, for thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead. Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side, and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might, and there came an arm and an hand above the water, and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water. So Sir Bedivere came again to the king, and told him what he saw. Alas, said the king, help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long. Then Sir Bedivere took the king upon his back, and so went with him to that water side. And when they were at the water side, even fast by the bank hove a little barge, with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and all they had black hoods, and all they wept and shrieked when they saw king Arthur. Now put me into the barge, said the king; and so he did softly. And there received him three queens with great mourning, and so they set him down, and in one of their laps king Arthur laid his head, and then that queen said, Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught overmuch cold. And so then they rowed from the land; and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried, Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies. Comfort thyself, said the king, and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in. For I will into the vale of Avilion, to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul. But ever the queens and the ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest, and so he went all that night, and in the morning he was ware betwixt two holts hoar of a chapel and an hermitage.

1. So refers to a supposed preceding portion, *Morte d'Arthur* being, as indicated in *The Epic*, a mere fragment.

3. King Arthur's table. The famous "Round Table" with its 150 seats. After it was named the order of knights established by Arthur,

A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.

—Guinevere.

4. **Lyonnesse.** A fabulous country extending from Cornwall to the Sicily Isles, and supposed to have been subsequently submerged by the sea.

6. **bold Sir Bedivere.** "Bold" is a permanent epithet that is connected with Sir Bedivere when there is no reason in the context for calling attention to that particular quality. Such permanent epithets are especially common in Homer, so Achilles is *ποδάργυρος* (swift footed), Ulysses *πολύμητις* (crafty), etc. In Virgil *pius* is a frequent epithet of Aeneas; in Scott, William of Deloraine is "good at need."

7. This line is omitted in *The Passing of Arthur*, the only change the poet made in the original poem when he developed *Morte d'Arthur* into *The Passing of Arthur*.

9. **chancel.** Properly, the eastern portion of the church containing the choir and altar, often railed off from the main part of the edifice.

12. **a great water.** "This phrase has probably often been ridiculed as affected phraseology for 'a great lake'; but it is an instance of the intense presentative power of Mr. Tennyson's genius. It precisely marks the appearance of a large lake outspread and taken in at one glance from a high ground. Had 'a great lake' been substituted for it, the phrase would have needed to be translated by the mind into water of a certain shape and size, before the picture was realized by the imagination. 'A great lake' is, in fact, one degree removed from the sensuous to the logical,—from the individual appearance to the generic name, and is, therefore, less poetic and pictorial" (Brimley). The word "water" is used in the same sense by Malory (see iv., 6).

21. **Camelot.** See note on *Lady of Shalott*, l. 5.

23. **Merlin.** The famous enchanter; he received Arthur at his birth, and reappears repeatedly in the legends; he is one of the chief characters in the Idyll *Merlin and Vivien*.

23-24. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, where this prophecy in regard to Arthur is referred to—

And Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn,
Though men may wound him, that he will not die,
But pass, and come again.

27. **Excalibur.** The word is said to be of Celtic origin and to mean 'cut-steel'; Spenser calls Arthur's sword *Mordure*, *i.e.*, 'the hard-biter.' In the stories of chivalry, the sword, spear, etc., of the heroes,

which often possessed magical powers, have commonly special names. In the following stanza from Longfellow, the names of the swords of Charlemagne, The Cid, Orlando, Arthur, and Lancelot are successively mentioned :

It is the sword of a good Knight,
Tho' homespun be his mail;
What matter if it be not bright
Jouguse, Colada, Durindale,
Excalibur, or Aroundight.

In *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 295, Excalibur is described :

the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich
With jewels—elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
“Take me,” but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
“Cast me away!”

31. **samite** is a rich silk stuff interwoven with threads of gold and silver.

37. **middle mere.** ‘Middle of the mere.’ Tennyson is imitating a common Latin construction ; cf. note on *Oenone*, 10.

38. **lightly.** ‘Nimble,’ ‘quickly’ ; the word is used frequently by Malory. See pp. 247-S above.

43. **hest.** ‘Command’ ; frequent in Shakespeare, etc.

48-51. Note the variations of consonants, vowels, and pauses in this line to give sound effects in keeping with the sense.

51. **levels.** “The classic *aequora* may have suggested the ‘shining levels,’ but there is a deeper reason for the change of phrase, for the great water as seen from the high ground, becomes a series of flashing surfaces when Sir Bedivere looks along it from its margin” (Brimley). Cf. Virgil, *Georgics I.*, 469 : *tellus quoque et aequora.*

55. **keen with frost.** We connect frost with transparency of the air, and the transparency of the air made the moonlight clearer.

56. **diamond sparks.** “The eds. down to 1853 have ‘diamond studs’” (Rolfe).

60. Now looking at one side of the question, now at another. The line is a translation of *Aeneid*, iv., 285 : *Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc.*

Atrides then his massy lance prepares,
In act to throw."

63. the many-knotted waterflags. This refers presumably to the iris which, with its blue and yellow flowers and sword shaped leaves, is so common near streams, pools, etc. What the poet refers to by "many-knotted" is not clear. Mr. Sykes enumerates the explanations in his note: "(1) The root stalk of the flag which shows additional bulbs from year to year; (2) the joints in the flower stalks, of which some half-dozen may be found in each stalk; (3) the large seed-pods that terminate the stalks, a very noticeable feature when the plant is sere; (4) the various bunches or knots of iris in a bed of the plants, so that the whole phrase suggests a thickly matted bed of flags. I favour the last interpretation, though Tennyson's fondness of technical accuracy in his references makes the second more than possible."

73. 'Thou hast been false to thy natural honesty, and to thy title of knight.' Cf. Malory: "And thou art named a noble knight and would betray me for the riches of the sword."

80. **lief.** 'Dear' (A. S. *leof*), used by Chaucer (e.g., *Troilus and Criseyde*, iii., l. 596: "myn uncle lief and dere"), Spenser, etc., but now obsolete except in the colloquial phrase, "I had as lief."

86. **chased.** 'Engraved with ornamental designs.'

103-106. Malory, i., 22, tells how Arthur first saw the Lady of the Lake: "So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair

water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo, said Merlin, yonder, is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake: What damsel is that, said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any upon earth and richly beseen."

110. **conceit.** Used, as often in Shakespeare, in the original sense of 'conception,' 'idea'; cf. *Merch. of Venice*, iii., 4, 2: "You have a noble and a true conceit of godlike amity."

112. The repetition of lines and phrases is Homeric.

122. Tennyson is fond of this bold metaphor; cf. *In Memoriam*, ix.: "Till all my widow'd race be run," *Jagher's Field*, 720: "I cry to vacant chairs and widow'd walls."

125. 'Who shouldst perform all the services which belonged to them severally.'

129. **for.** 'Since': a use of *for* common in Shakespeare, e.g., *Richard III.*, ii., 2, 85 (see Abbot's *Shakespearian Grammar*, § 151).

139. **a streamer of the northern morn.** A ray of the Aurora Borealis (Aurora = dawn, Boreas = northern). Cf. Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, iv., 9:

Shifting like flashes darted forth
By the red streamers of the north.

140. **the moving isles, etc.** Icebergs; the aurora is more conspicuous in northern latitudes.

171. **Remorsefully.** 'With pity.' *Remorse* is employed by Shakespeare in sense of 'pity'; so *Merch. of Ven.*, iv., 1, 20:

Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange
Than is thy strange apparent cruelty.

and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, iv., 3, 13:

O Eglamour thou art a gentleman
Valiant, wise, remorseful, well accomplish'd.

182. His breath, made visible by the frosty air, clung about him.

183. The effect that mist has in enlarging the apparent size of objects is a matter of common experience, cf. *Guinevere*, 597:

The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold.

186. **Dry clash'd.** We speak of *liquid* sounds; *dry* as applied to sounds means harsh and abrupt. The metaphor is suggested by classical phrases; so in *Iliad*, xiii., 409: *καρπαζέει ἀσπίς ἄνω* ('the shield rang dry' when struck by a spear); *Lucretius*, vi., 119, uses *aridus sonus* (dry sound) in reference to certain kinds of thunder; again Virgil *Georg.* I., 357-8: *aridus fragor*. Cf. *The Voyage*, I. 10:

Warm broke the breeze against the brow,
Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail.

harness. 'Body-armour'—the original meaning of the word. Cf. *Macbeth*, v., 5, 52: "At least we'll die with harness on our back."

186-90. Similar sound-effects in frosty air are noted by Wordsworth, *Influence of Natural Objects*:—

With the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud,
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron.

192. 'The reflections of the moon on the water.'

193. **hove.** For 'hove in sight'; from *heave* 'to rise,' as in Gray's *Elegy*: "Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap"; the phrase is applied to a vessel *rising* above the horizon.

197. **Black-stoled.** *Stole* is a long loose robe reaching to the feet; cf. *Sir Galahad*, 43.

199. **shiver'd.** Cf. *The Princess*, iii., 73: "Consonant chords that shiver to one note." In the present passage the word seems to convey not only the idea of vibration, but also of shrillness.

tingling. As if the stars had nerves which thrilled in response.

202-3. The details are very effective in suggesting a picture of utter desolation.

209. **casque.** 'Helmet.'

214. **the springing east.** 'The rising sun.' Cf. p. 202. 2nd sentence.

215. **greaves.** See note on *Lady of Shalott*, I. 76.

cuisse. Armour for the thighs; cf. *I. Hen. IV.*, iv., 1, 105: "His cuisses on his thighs."

235. Cf. Malory, xiv., 2: "Also Merlin made the Round Table in tokening of the roundness of the world, for by the Round Table is the world signified by right."

240-1. These two lines give expression to the inner sense of the poem.
Cf. *In Memoriam*, Prologue :

Our little systems have their day ;
They have their day and cease to be ;
They are but broken lights of thee
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

242. In order that men may develop, and not stagnate, there is need of change. Even good customs are apt to degenerate into mere formalities, and to hamper the growth of the human spirit.

244-5. "My God accept my work and, absorbing it, as it were, into Himself, purify it of all its unworthy elements" (Rowe and Webb).

254. The idea of the earth being bound to the heavens by a gold chain is an old one, and has been supposed to originate with Homer (*Iliad*, viii., 25-26). It is found in *Par. Lost*, ii., 1051, in Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, there is an allusion to it : "According to the allegory of the poets the highest link of nature's chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair," and in Hare's Sermon on the Law of Self-Sacrifice : "This is the golden chain of love, whereby the whole creation is bound to the throne of the Creator."

259. Malory speaks in one passage of a valley and in others of an island of Avilion—mere places of earth, however ; but in Celtic legend the name is connected with the habitation of the blest, and it is in that sense that the poet uses it here.

260. Cf. the description of Elysium, *Odyssey*, vi., 42 :

ὅθι φησὶ θεῶν ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ
ἔμμεναι οὔτ' ἀνέμοισι τινασσεύεται οὔτε ποτ' ὄμβρος
δένεται οὔτε χιὼν ἐπιπύλαται

(Where, they say, the seat of the Gods abideth sure, nor is it shaken by winds or ever wetted by shower, nor does snow come near it.)

and *Lucretius*, iii., 18-22 :—

apparet divum numen sedesque quietae
quas neque concutunt venti nec nubila nimbis
aspergunt neque nix aeri concreta pruina
cana cadens violat semperque innubilis aether
integit.

(The divinity of the gods is revealed and their tranquil abodes which neither winds do shake nor clouds drench with rains nor snow congealed by sharp frost harms with hoary fall : an ever-cloudless aether o'creanopies them.)

and Tennyson himself in *Lucretius* :—

The Gods, who haunt
The lucid interspaces of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow.

218. **High from the daïs-throne.** ‘As he sat elevated on the daïs-throne.’

223. In the later *Idylls of the King*, the poet's conception of Arthur changes somewhat; and he represents his hero as indifferent about his success in tournaments; he is inferior in this respect to Lancelot (see *Gareth and Lynette*, 485-6), but excels in real battle; cf. *Lancelot and Elaine*, ll. 310, fol.

232. Cf. *Matthew* ii., 1-11: “Now when Jesus was born . . . behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him . . . And, lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was . . . And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

234. **Round Table.** See note on l. 3.

262. **Deep-meadow'd.** A translation of *βαθύχειμος* (*Iliad*, ix., 151).

happy. The commentators compare Virgil's “*laetas segetes*” (glad harvest).

263. **crown'd with summer sea.** Cf. *Odyssey*, x., 195: *νήσον, πῆρ' ἐπερὶ πόντος ἀπείριτος ἐστεφάνωται* (an island round which the infinite sea has made a crown).

267. **fluting.** ‘Singing with flute-like notes.’ The notion of the swan singing before death is very ancient; it is found in Virgil, Pliny, etc.; cf. *Othello*, v., 2: “I will play the swan and die in music,” Tennyson's *Dying Swan*, etc.

268. **Ruffles.** Refers to the slight opening out of the wings when the swan swims.

269. **swarthy webs.** ‘The dark webbed feet.’

ULYSSES.

This poem was first published in 1842, and has remained unaltered. Among the Greeks who fought against Troy, Ulysses was conspicuous, especially for fortitude, wisdom, and craft. On his return voyage to Ithaca, he gave offence to Poseidon (Neptune), and was in consequence delayed by numerous misfortunes. These adventures are the subject of the *Odyssæa*, which represents him as finally restored to his kingdom and his faithful wife Penelope.

Tennyson, in the poem before us, accepts this character, but represents the hero after his return dominated in his old age by a thoroughly modern feeling—the restless desire of experience and knowledge. The hint for this amplification of Homer, Tennyson found, as is pointed out by Mr. Churton Collins, in Dante: “The germ, the spirit, and the sentiment of this poem are from the twenty-sixth canto of Dante’s *Inferno*. Tennyson has indeed done little but fill in the sketch of the great Florentine. As is usual with him in all cases where he borrows, the details and minuter portions of his work are his own; he has added grace, elaboration, and symmetry; he has called in the assistance of other poets. A rough crayon draught has been metamorphosed into a perfect picture. As the resemblances lie not so much in expression as in general tone, we will in this case substitute for the original a literal version. Ulysses is speaking:

Neither fondness for my son, nor reverence for my aged sire, nor the due love which ought to have gladdened Penelope, could conquer in me the ardour which I had to become experienced in the world, and in human vice and worth. I put out into the deep open sea with but one ship, and with that small company which had not deserted me. . . . I and my companions were old and tardy when we came to that narrow pass where Hercules assigned his landmarks. ‘O brothers,’ I said, ‘who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, deny not to this brief vigil of your senses which remain, experience of the unpeopled world beyond the sun. Consider your origin; ye were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge.’ . . . Night already saw the other pole with all its stars, and ours so low that it rose not from the ocean floor (*Inferno*, xxvi., 94-126).”

Mr. Knowles reports Tennyson as saying when speaking of *In Memoriam*: “It [*In Memoriam*] is a very impersonal poem as well as personal. There is more about myself in ‘Ulysses,’ which was written under the sense of loss, and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought to the end. It was more written with the feeling of his loss upon me than many poems in ‘In Memoriam.’” The “loss” referred to, is of course the death of his friend Hallam.

We have, then, in the *Ulysses*, a particularly happy example of the infusion of the poet's own mood and feeling into a character and situation which serve to bring them out and intensify them for the reader. Ulysses,—full of knowledge and experience, but with that inevitable sense of the diminution of power, of hopefulness, and of the possibilities of life, which comes with age,—still feels within his heart that insatiable craving for more light and more life which lies deep in every more finely touched spirit; and the words put into his mouth by the poet, become for the reader a typical expression of similar yearning for the infinite, and of the similar sense of limitation and loss however occasioned. For the expression of a kindred mood, compare *Merlin and the Gleam*.

The blank verse of the poem is at once characteristic and masterly. In short, as Mr. Stedman (*Victorian Poets*) says: "For visible grandeur and astonishingly compact expression, there is no blank verse poem, equally restricted as to length, that approaches the *Ulysses*."

2. **among these barren crags** of Ithaca, the domain of Ulysses, an island near the entrance of the gulf of Corinth.

3. **mete and dole.** The words are used to indicate the pettiness of the work; indeed, the wording of the first five lines indicates the speaker's discontent with the existing conditions of his life.

5. **and know not me.** 'My broad and varied experience have given me a spirit and ideas which are beyond the comprehension and sympathy of the inhabitants of this isle, limited as they are by the narrow round of their daily lives.'

6-7. Cf. *Macbeth*, ii., 3:

The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

8. **suffer'd greatly.** The poem is full of touches that recall Homer; one of the stock epithets of Ulysses is *πολύτλας* 'much enduring.'

10. **the rainy Hyades.** A group of stars in the head of the constellation 'Taurus' which, when they rose with the sun were supposed to bring rain; hence the name which is derived from the Gk. verb for 'to rain.' Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, i., 744: Arcturum, pluviasque Hyadas, geminosque Triones.

11. **I am become a name.** 'I have become famous.' For this use of *name*, cf. *Dream of Fair Women*, 163; it is a common Latin idiom, cf. *Aeneid*, ii., 89, etc.

17. ringing with the clash of weapons.

18. Cf. *Æneid*, ii. 6 : quorum pars magna fui. Virgil uses the phrase in the sense of having taken a large share in events ; Tennyson means more than that : Ulysses has not only been influential in all matters in which he has been concerned, but these things have in their turn contributed to make him what he is.

19-21. Our experience at once reveals and limits our perception of the possibilities of life and knowledge ; these last are infinite, and, therefore, our advance only serves to widen our perception of their extent. So, experience may be compared to an arch, which at once enables us to see, and limits our vision of, the world beyond, whose horizon continually recedes as we approach.

22. Cf. Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, iii., 3, 150, where Ulysses says—

Perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright ; to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery.

25. one, *i.e.*, one life.

29. three suns. 'Three years' ; so 'moons' for months. *Gardener's Daughter*, l. 15 : "for some three careless moons, The summer pilot of an empty heart."

33. Telemachus is represented in the *Odyssey* as a prudent young man ; Tennyson makes him an impersonation of humdrum respectability without genius and inspiration which belongs to the higher spirit of Ulysses. There is just a touch of contempt in Ulysses' reference to him.

44-45. Note how suggestive and admirable is the background indicated by this touch of landscape, and by lines 54-56.

45, fol. Cf. Tencer's address to his companions in Horace, *Odes*, i., 7 :

O fortes pejora qui passi
Mecum sæpe viri, nunc vino pelliti curas ;
Cras ingens iterabimus aequor.

In the Homeric story Ulysses had no such mariners ; they all perished on the return voyage from Troy.

53. According to Homer the Gods themselves took part in the conflicts before the walls of Troy, Mars and Venus fighting for the Trojans.

54. 'The lights of the houses.'

55. Note the happy effect of the long monosyllables, and the double caesura.

58-59. **sitting . . . furrows.** Suggested by the oft-recurring line of the *Odyssey*: ἐξῆς δ' ἐξόμενοι πόλιν ἄλυστον ἱπασμοῖς (And sitting in order they smote the hoary sea with their oars).

60-61. **the baths** Of all the western stars. The place where the stars seem to plunge into the Ocean. So in *Iliad*, xviii., 48, it is said of the Constellation of the Bear: οἷη δ' ἄμφορός ἐστι λαστρῶν Ωκεανοῖο ('it alone is free from the baths of Ocean').

62. In Homer, Ocean is represented as a mighty stream encompassing the earth; at the western side its waters plunge into a vast chasm where is the entrance to Hades (see *Odyssey*, x., 511. fol.).

63. **the Happy Isles.** The "Fortunatae Insulae" ('Islands of the Blessed') which were supposed to lie somewhere to the west of the Pillars of Hercules, and were sometimes identified with Elysium, the dwelling-place, after death, of favoured heroes.

64. **Achilles** the greatest of the Greek heroes before Troy.

66. **strength.** Abstract for concrete—'that strong band.'

70. Note how the coincidence of the metrical pauses between the feet, with the sense pauses, gives a movement to the line in keeping with the thought expressed.

ST. AGNES' EVE.

Published originally in *The Keepsake* for 1837, under the title of *St. Agnes*; included in the *Poems* of 1842; the title changed to *St. Agnes' Eve* in the edition of 1855.

January 21st is sacred to St. Agnes who, it is narrated, refused to marry the heathen son of the pretor, and after terrible persecution suffered martyrdom in the reign of the emperor Diocletian (284-305, A.D.). With St. Agnes' Eve various superstitions were connected, more especially that upon observing the proper rites, a maiden might see her future husband (cf. Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes*). It is possible that Tennyson felt that the character and circumstances delineated in the poem did not exactly suit St. Agnes, and, accordingly changed the title

of the poem, leaving the heroine a nameless embodiment of that ascetic enthusiasm which finds its masculine representative in Sir Galahad; she is "the pure and beautiful enthusiast who has died away from all her human emotions, and become the bride for whom a Heavenly Bridegroom is waiting.... Wordsworth at his best, as in 'Lucy,' might scarcely match the music of these stanzas; their pictorial perfection he could hardly attain unto; every image is in such delicate harmony with the pure young worshipper that it seems to have been transfigured by her purity, and in the last four lines the very sentences faint with the breathless culmination of her rapture" (Lucy).

16. **argent round.** 'The full moon.'

19. **mine earthly house.** Cf. *II. Corinthians*, v., 1: "For we know if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens."

21. **Break up.** 'Break open,' as in *I. Henry VI.*, 1, 3, and *Matthew*, xxiv., 43: "If the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he.... would not have suffered his house to be broken up."

25-36. She too has her marvellous vision, like other maidens on St. Agnes' Eve, but a vision of an import and character very different from theirs.

35. **the shining sea.** Cf. *Revelation*, xv., 2: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast.... stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."

SIR GALAHAD.

This, like *The Lady of Shalott*, is one of the earlier poems in which Tennyson works upon materials afforded by Arthurian romance. In Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Sir Galahad is the knight who lived 'a clean maiden' and in consequence saw the Holy Grail. Tennyson seizes upon this personage to embody a type of the combination of ascetic and knightly virtue—of that devotion to an ideal which led the devotee to disregard earthly ties and bodily needs, and to live in a spiritual ecstasy. This poem represents the masculine side of the same spiritual condition which is unfolded in *St. Agnes' Eve*. Sir Galahad reappears in the *Idylls of the King*, being one of the prominent personages in *The Holy Grail*.

5. **shattering.** The epithet is used to denote the broken and stunning sounds of a trumpet peal.

6. **brand.** Sword; the word is from the same root as 'burn,' and was, perhaps, employed in the present sense on account of the brightness of swords.

9. **lists.** Originally the barriers that enclosed the ground for a tournament, then the ground itself.

11-12. The lady spectators scattered flowers upon the successful combatants, from the galleries which overlooked the lists.

14. **on whom** = on those on whom. Similar omissions are common in Shakespeare, etc. ; cf. *Measure for Measure*, ii., 2: "Most ignorant of what he is most assur'd."

18. **crypt.** 'Underground cell.'

21-22. He refers to the vision of the Holy Grail, which appeared only to the pure, and to the special favour of heaven which such vision indicates.

25. **crescent.** 'The crescent moon.'

31. **stalls.** 'The seats belonging to the clergy in the choir of a cathedral.'

42. **the Holy Grail.** The word 'grail' or 'graal,' means originally a bowl. According to the legend found in Malory and other versions of Arthurian story, the *Sangreal*, or holy grail was the vessel in which Jesus sacrificed the paschal lamb (or according to some versions, the cup which he used at the Last Supper). With this vessel Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood that flowed from the wound upon the Cross. Joseph brought it to Britain (see *Fairy Queen*, ii., 10, 53). It could not be seen by any one who was not perfectly pure, and so was lost. The Grail had mystical and miraculous powers, and to find it became one of the quests of the Knights of the Round Table. Tennyson has treated the subject more fully in his '*Holy Grail*,' one of the *Idylls of the King*.

51. The emphasis is of course on the "ere."

Ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long.

—*Hamlet*, i. 1.

53. **the leads.** *Lead* was the common covering for roofs of substantial buildings in earlier times. It has been suggested that this noise of hail upon the roof is inconsistent with l. 52.

61. According to Malory's account of Sir Galahad's death, Joseph of Arimathea appears to him and says: "thou hast resembled me in two things, in that thou hast seen the marvels of the Sangreal and in that thou hast been a clean maiden."

'AS THRO' THE LAND AT EVE 'WE WENT.'

This and the following six songs are from *The Princess*, published in 1847. These songs (with the exception of "*Tears, idle tears*") were not, however, inserted until the third edition of the poem appeared in 1850.*

In *The Princess*, a party of ladies and gentlemen are gathered on a pleasant summer day in the ruins of an old abbey, and to pass the time, seven young men tell in succession an impromptu story about a Princess who founded a college for women. The story is thus divided into seven parts, and between the parts a song is inserted, supposed to be sung by the ladies --

the women sang
Between the rougher voices of the men,
Like linnets in the pauses of the wind.

These six songs are given in the text, together with "*Tears, idle tears*," which is not one of the interludes, but belongs to the story itself.

6-9. The poem as originally printed consisted of two stanzas of five lines each. The ll. 6-9 were subsequently added and the lines printed without division into stanzas. In Dr. Rand's MS. the song stands as printed in our text except that lines 4 and 13 are wanting.

'SWEET AND LOW, SWEET AND LOW.'

6. **dying.** 'Setting.'

14-15. These phrases are thrown in without grammatical construction, a practice extremely common in earlier forms of poetry. The connection in thought is sufficiently apparent.

* Dr. Theodore H. Rand, of McMaster University, has in his possession autograph copies of these intercalary songs which present some variations from the printed text. Dr. Rand's account of these MSS. and facsimile copies is to be found in the Appendix to Dr. Sykes' *Select Poems of Tennyson* (Gage, Toronto, 1894).

‘THE SPLENDOUR FALLS ON CASTLE WALLS.’

1. **splendour.** The splendour of sunset.
3. **long light.** The rays of light seem long because the sun is low in the horizon.
- shakes.** ‘Quivers through the motion of the water.’
9. **scar.** ‘A bare or broken place on the side of a mountain’; the word is frequently used by Scott in the form *scaur*.
10. The mysterious and faint character of the echoes is well suited to suggest fairy agency.

‘TEARS, IDLE TEARS, I KNOW NOT WHAT THEY MEAN.’

In *The Princess* we hear how a party of ladies from the college spend a summer afternoon in a scientific ramble :—

Many a little hand
Glanced like a touch of sunshine on the rocks,
Many a light foot shone like a jewel set
In the dark crag: and then we turn'd, we wound
About the cliffs, the copses, out and in,
Hammering and clinking, chattering stony names
Of shale and hornblende, rag and trap and tuff,
Amygdaloid and trachyte, till the Sun
Grew broader toward his death and fell, and all
The rosy heights came out above the lawns.

then they gathered up their evening repast, and the Princess asked some one to sing—

and a maid,
Of those beside her, smote her harp, and sang.
‘Tears, idle tears,’ etc.

The form of this poem should be noted; non-rhyming verse has not often been employed for lyrical purposes in modern English. Milton uses it but with very partial success in the choruses of *Samson Agonistes*. The most successful example of such use before Tennyson is the well known *Ode to Evening*, by Collins (1721-1759), which may be found in the *Appendix* to this volume. Mr. James Knowles, in *The Nineteenth Century* for Jan. 1893, reports that Tennyson speaking

of this song said: "It is in a way like St. Paul's 'groanings which cannot be uttered.' It was written at Tintern when the woods were all yellowing with autumn seen through the ruined windows. It is what I have always felt even from a boy, and what as a boy I called the 'passion of the past.' And it is so always with me now; it is the distance that charms me in the landscape, the picture and the past, and not the immediate to-day in which I move" (Compare with this last sentence the poem *Far-far-away*). The "Tintern" referred to is Tintern Abbey, "perhaps the most beautiful ruin in England," on the right bank of the Wye in Monmouthshire, associated with Wordsworth's well-known *Lines written above Tintern Abbey*.

Prof. W. M. Dixon is "inclined to regard [this poem] as the most characteristic of his genius of any poem ever written by the author, and that for two reasons. It is his most successful expression of the emotion of vague regret, of dumb inarticulate pain of heart, a province of universal human feeling, which Tennyson alone among poets has found a voice to render, and thus made particularly his own."

The idea and feeling of this song are expressed in an early poem of Tennyson's published in *The Gem* for 1831, but not contained in his collected works:

O sad no more! O sweet no more!
 O strange no more!
 By a mossed brookbank on a stone
 I smelt a wildwood flower alone;
 There was a ringing in my ears,
 And both my eyes gushed out with tears,
 Surely all pleasant things had gone before,
 Low-buried fathom deep beneath with thee,
No more!

'THY VOICE IS HEARD THRO' ROLLING DRUMS.'

This song received its present form in the edition of 1851; the following is the earlier version:—

Lady, let the rolling drums
 Beat to battle where thy warrior stands;
 Now thy face across his fancy comes
 And gives the battle to his hands.

Lady, let the trumpet blow,
 Clasp thy little babes about thy knee:
 Now their warrior father meets the foe,
 And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

1-2. Dr. Rand's MS. reads :

When all among the thundering drums
Thy soldier in the battle stands.

8. **thine.** Dr. Rand's MS. has “them” ; the reading in the text is a great improvement.

‘HOME THEY BROUGHT HER WARRIOR DEAD.’

In a volume of selections published in 1865, Tennyson included another version of this song:—

Home they brought him slain with spears,
They brought him home at evenfall ;
All alone she sits and hears,
Echoes in the empty hall,
Sounding on the morrow.

The sun peeped in from open field,
The boy began to leap and prance,
Rode upon his father's lance,
Beat upon his father's shield,
“Oh hush, my joy, my sorrow.”

The poem may have been suggested by an incident in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, i., 9:—

But o'er her warrior's bloody bier
The Ladye dropp'd nor flower nor tear !
Vengeance, deep-brooding o'er the slain,
Had lock'd the source of softer woe ;
And burning pride and high disdain,
Forbade the rising tear to flow ;
Until, amid his sorrowing clan,
Her son lisp'd from the nurse's knee—
“And if I live to be a man,
My father's death revenged shall be !”
Then fast the mother's tears did seek
To dew the infant's kindling cheek.

3. **watching.** Dr. Rand's MS. has “whispering.”

‘ASK ME NO MORE: THE MOON MAY DRAW THE SEA.’

This song is closely linked in thought to the subject of *Part VII.* of *The Princess*, to which it forms a prologue. In *Part VII.* we are told how the Princess, under the influence of kindly feelings, undertakes to

nurse the wounded hero, her long repulsed suitor, how pity gave place in her heart to a tenderer interest, how her novel ideas and schemes for her sex give place, and 'Love at last is lord of all,' or to quote the words of the Prince—

Till out of long frustration of her care,
 And pensive tendance in the all-weary noons,

 And out of hauntings of my spoken love,
 And lonely listenings to my mutter'd dream,
 And often feeling of the helpless hands,
 And wordless broodings on the wasted cheek—
 From all a closer interest flourish'd up,
 Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to these,
 Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with tears
 By some cold morning glacier; frail at first
 And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
 But such as gather'd colour day by day.

Mr. P. M. Wallace in his notes on this song, says:—"Note the predominance in this song of monosyllables. Of the 125 words which it contains only seven have more than one syllable, and these only two. This feature imparts a peculiar stateliness to the composition, emphasising the solemnity of its tone without impairing its melody."

3. **fold to fold.** Dr. Rand's MS. has "fold on fold."

12. Cf. Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 772:

And all in vain you strive against the stream.

For "and" in this line Dr. Rand's MS. reads "but."

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

The Idylls of the King.—Tennyson's early purpose of writing "a whole great poem" on the subject of Arthur has been referred to in the introductory notes on *The Epic*, pp. 244-5, where *Morte d'Arthur*, published in 1842, is represented as a fragment of such a poem. In 1857 a volume entitled *Enid and Nimuë*; or, *The True and the False* was printed but immediately withdrawn; it contained the earliest forms of the two idylls subsequently published under the titles *Enid*, and *Virien*. In June 1858, Clough records that he had "heard Tennyson read a third Arthur poem—the detection of Guinevere, and the last interview with Arthur." Finally, in 1859 a volume appeared entitled *Idylls of the King*, containing four Idylls: *Enid*, *Virien*, *Elaine*, *Guine-*

vere. In 1862 the *Dedication* was prefixed. In 1869 four more Idylls were published, *The Coming of Arthur*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pellucas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur* (an extended form of *Morte d'Arthur*, see p. 246 of this volume); by these poems, for the first time, Tennyson binds the *Idylls* into a sort of unit. Subsequently, additions were made: in 1871, *The Last Tournament*; in 1872, *Gareth and Lynette*, and the lines *To the Queen* which form a conclusion to the whole poem; in 1885, *Balin and Balan*. In the complete editions of Tennyson's works, these various parts will be found arranged in their proper order, with the titles in the case of the Idylls of 1859 slightly changed, and one of them, *Enid*, divided into two (*The Marriage of Geraint*, and *Geraint and Enid*).

In this irregular fashion the poet constructed something which he wished to be regarded as a whole—a single work. The much debated question of how far the poet is justified in his view, we can, with only *one* idyll before us, scarcely discuss with profit; but perhaps it is safe to say that whatever unity there is, is not of a very high order; it doubtless adds interest to the individual poems, but does not constitute them an effective artistic whole. Apart from the external unity of story or plot which he strove to give, the poet added another unifying principle—an underlying purpose and meaning. He says in the closing address to the Queen:

accept this old imperfect tale
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul
Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain-peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still;

But, again, as from the point of view of plot, there is no complete unfolding of the theme, so here through symbolism no defined ground covered. Neither plot-interest nor symbolic sense absolutely requires certain of the idylls, and there is no reason why others might not have been added which should have contributed as much as those actually written to unfolding the concrete story, or the underlying meaning.

Lancelot and Elaine.—The poem before us is almost the *Elaine* of 1859; the alterations, as will be seen from the following notes, are very small. It was written, therefore, before the poet had given any indications that these idylls were intended to form parts of a greater whole. We can safely, then, presume that this idyll is capable of being sufficiently appreciated by itself, out of relation to the other idylls; we are only in the position in which Tennyson put the readers of the edition of

1859—a volume which, on the face of it, simply contained four studies of female character from Arthurian legend, not parts of a greater poem. Further, there was not in the volume of 1859 (as in the setting of *Morte d'Arthur*, or in the address *To the Queen*) any hint given to the readers of a symbolic meaning. It is very questionable if such meaning were present in his mind when he wrote the four idylls of 1859. Some of the later idylls such as *Gareth and Lynette*, and *The Holy Grail* must be interpreted symbolically to be fully appreciated. But of the many writers who have treated of the deeper significance of the idylls, no one seems to have found much symbolism in the present poem.

In the completed poem, Arthur represents the Soul, or the spiritual element in man, or the universe, or the ideal; Guinevere, the body, or the flesh, or the purely material; Merlin, the intellect; the knights the various powers of man, etc. But such interpretation can scarcely be applied to *Lancelot and Elaine*, nor is the poem made a whit more beautiful or effective by the attempt, although this need not be true in the case of some of the other idylls. The source of the story is Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*; the relation of the poem to the original is illustrated by full quotations in the notes, but the student will do well to consult Malory himself.*

2. Malory calls her "Elaine le Blank" (*i.e.* the *blanche* or white).

Astolat. The name which appears as "Shalott" in Tennyson's earlier treatment of this theme. Malory identifies this place with Guildford in Surrey, but the geography of Tennyson's *Idylls* is purely imaginary.

9. **blazon'd.** The word 'blazon' meant properly a shield; hence armorial bearings. The derived verb employed in this passage means to depict in colours as heraldic devices are depicted.

10. **tinct.** The common modern form of the word is 'tint'; 'tinct' is to be found in *Hamlet*, iii., 4, 91, and *Cymb.*, ii., 2, 23.

wit. Not in the narrower sense common in modern English, but in the broader original sense of 'intellect in general.' *Of her wit*, 'out of her own invention.'

16. **read.** 'Perused,' 'studied.'

22. **Caerlyle.** Carlisle in Cumberland. *Caer* is of Celtic origin and means castle.

*A cheap and convenient edition of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is published in Macmillan's *Globe Library*.

23. **Caerleon** upon Usk is South Wales ; cf. *Geraint and Enid* :

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon-upon-Usk.

One of Arthur's twelve great battles was fought here.

Camelot. See on *Lady of Shalott*, l. 5.

31. **jousts.** 'A tournament.'

34. In the edition of 1859 the lines read :—

For Arthur when none knew from whence he came,
Long ere the people chose him for their king,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse.

The story of the origin of the jousts and the prize of diamonds is not in Malory.

35. **Lyonesse.** See note on *Morte d'Arthur*, l. 4.

45. This line was originally :—

And one of these, the King, had on a crown.

53. **shingly.** 'Covered with loose pebbles ; cf. *Enoch Arden*, 733 ; "Lest the harsh shingle should grate underfoot." 'Shingle' in this sense is, according to Skeat, a word of different origin from 'Shingle' as applied to the covering of roofs.

scaur. See note on "*The splendour falls*," l. 9.

59. **Divinely.** 'By divine guidance.'

62. There were nine diamonds, four on each side, and one in front (see l. 46 above).

65. **The heathen.** The Saxons and Norsemen against whom the British were fighting.

67. **still.** 'Always,' 'on each occasion' ; cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 176. This use of 'still' is common in Shakespeare, cf. *Hamlet*, ii., 2, 42.

75-76. **the place,** etc. 'London.'

76. **let proclaim.** 'Caused to be proclaimed,' so in *Marriage of Geraint*, 152 : "the good king gave orders to let blow his horns for hunting." This use of 'let' was sufficiently common in earlier English. So in the passage of Malory on which this is based (xviii., 3) : "The king let cry a great jousts and tournament that should be that day at

Camelot, that is Winchester." An example of Tennyson's poetic diction, see p. 202 of this volume.

78, fol. Compare Malory, xviii., 8 :

"So King Arthur made him ready to depart to these jousts and would have had the queen with him: but that time she would not, she said, for she was sick and might not ride at that time. That me repenteth, said the King, for this seven year ye saw not such a fellowship together, except at Whitsuntide, when Galahad departed from the court. Truly, said the queen to the King, you must hold me excused, I may not be there, and that me repenteth."

89. **Love-loyal.** For similar examples of Tennyson's use of alliterative compound words, see "tiny-trumpeting" (l. 137), "barren-beaten" (l. 161), "green-glimmering" (l. 483), "strange-statued" (l. 800).

91. **tale.** 'Number.' cf. *Egeus*, v., 8: "And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them," and Macaulay's *Horatius*: "And now hath every city sent up her tale of men."

94. **lets.** 'Hinders.' Cf. *Hamlet*, i., 4, 95: "I'll make a ghost of him that lets me"; so in the collect for the fourth Sunday in Advent: "through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us."

97, fol. Cf. Malory, xviii., 8 :

"Sir Launcelet ye are greatly to blame, thus to hold you behind my lord; what trow ye, what will your enemies and mine say and deem? Nought else but see how Sir Launcelet holdeth him ever behind the King and so doth the Queen, for that they would be together: and thus will they say, said the queen to Launcelet, have ye no doubt thereof."

103, fol. Cf. Malory, xviii., 9 :

"Madam, said Sir Launcelet, I allow your wit, 'tis of late come sin [*i. e.*, since] ye were so wise, and therefore Madam, as at this time I will be ruled by your counsel, and this night I will take my rest, and to-morrow by time will take my way toward Winchester."

106. **the myriad cricket.** Cf. *Enoch Arden*, 579: "The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl."

108. **is nothing.** 'Is of no account, not worthy of regard.'

110. **worship.** Cf. *Merlin and Vivien*, 11-13 :

Sir Lancelot worshipit no unmarried girl
But the great Queen herself, fought in her name,
Sware by her.

and *Guinevere* :

To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds.

is allow'd. According to *The New English Dictionary*, there are confounded in the word 'allow' two words of different origins, one ultimately from Lat. *allaudare*, 'to praise' another from *allocare*, 'to assign, bestow.' "Between the two primary significations there naturally arose a variety of uses blending them in the general idea of *assign with approval*, grant, concede a thing claimed or urged, admit a thing offered, permit, etc., etc." As an illustration of this variation in the meaning, compare the use of *allow* in the line before us with its use in lines 153 and 202 below, and also Malory's use of the same word in the passage quoted in the note to l. 103. In the present passage the meaning 'is allowed of' is closer to *allaudare* than in the most ordinary modern use; cf. *Luke*, xi., 48: "Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers."

118. **devoir.** 'Duty.' Chaucer, *Clerkes Tale*, l. 28, Spenser, *Shepherd's Calendar*, ix., 227; especially 'knightly duty,' cf. Malory, vii., 23, xx., 18.

121-2. Cf. l. 132 below and *Maud*, Pt. I., ii.:

Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
Dead perfection, no more.

127. Cf. l. 95 above.

130. In *Gareth and Lynette*, these are described as vows—

Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King.

and in another place Merlin calls them—

Such vows as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the which
No man can keep.

In *Guinevere*, Arthur says of his knights—

I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,

To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
 To honour his own word as if his God's,
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
 To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
 And worship her by years of noble deeds,
 Until they won her.

134. **The low sun.** 'The sun low in the horizon' which colours the clouds, unlike "the Sun in heaven" (l. 123) which gives a white light. Cf. ll. 113-4 below.

135. **the bond of marriage.**

137-9. Cf. 105-8 above.

143-4. Cf. the seventh line of the passage from *Guinevere* quoted in note on l. 130.

148. **wit.** 'Intelligence sufficient to get you out of your difficulty.'

153. **allow.** See note on l. 110 above.

158. **prove.** 'Show the character of his work and justify it.'

175, fol. Cf. Malory, xviii., 9 :

"This old baron had a daughter that time that was called the fair maid of Astolat. And ever she beheld Sir Launcelot wonderfully. And, as the book saith, she cast such love unto Sir Launcelot that she could never withdraw her love, wherefore she died; and her name was Elaine le Blank. So thus as she came to and fro, she was so hot in her love that she besought Sir Launcelot to wear upon him at the justs a token of hers. Fair damsel, said Sir Launcelot, and if I grant you that, ye may say I do more for you love than ever I did for lady or damsel. Then he remembered him that he would go to the justs disguised, and for because he had never afore that time borne no manner of token of no damsel, then he bethought him that he would bear one of her, that none of his blood thereby might know him. And then he said, Fair maiden, I will grant you to wear a token of yours upon my helmet, and therefore what it is shew it me. Sir, she said, it is a red sleeve of mine, of scarlet well embroidered with great pearls. So she brought it him. So Sir Launcelot received it and said, Never did I erst so much for no damsel. And then Sir Launcelot betook the fair maiden his shield in keeping, and prayed her to keep that until that he came again. And so that night he had merry rest and great cheer. For ever the damsel Elaine was about Sir Launcelot, all the while she might be suffered."

182. **Livest between the lips.** Cf. *Aeneid*, xii., 235: *vivusque per ora feretur*.

188, fol. Cf. Malory, xviii., 9 :

"Fair Sir, said Sir Launcelot to his host, I would pray you to lend me a shield that were not openly known, for mine is well known. Sir, said his host, ye shall have your desire, for me seemeth ye be one of the likeliest knights in the world, and therefore I

shall shew you friendship. Sir, wit you well I have two sons which were but late made knights, and the eldest hight Sir Terre, and he was hurt that same day that he was made knight, that he may not ride, and his shield ye shall have, for that is not known, I dare say, but here and in no place else. And my youngest son hight Sir Lavaine, and if it please you he shall ride with you unto that justs, and he is of his age strong and wight."

197. his shield is blank enough. See *Gareth and Lynette*, 405-409, where it is said of the shields carved about the walls of Arthur's hall--

When some good knight had done one noble deed,
His arms were carven only ; but if twain
His arms were blazon'd also ; but if none
The shield was blank and bare without a sign
Saving the name beneath.

202. Allow him. See note on l. 101.

219. an if. A phrase in common use in Middle English for 'if,' originally 'and if,' sometimes merely 'an.' Cf. *I. Henry VI.*, v., 4, 125: "It dies and if it had a thousand lives." Abbot, *Shakespearian Grammar*, 103, gives many examples.

234. slightly—slight. Such repetitions of forms of the same word, or of the same word in different applications are frequent in Tennyson ; so *kindly—kind* (l. 265), *hard-won—hardly won* (l. 1165), *worship—worshipfully* (l. 1327-9), also l. 164, 262.

244. read. See note on l. 16 above.

247. 'mar' is used in reference to the face in *Par. Lost*, iv., 166: *Isaiah*, iii., 14.

252. Cf. the account in *Luke*, viii., 29: "For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him : and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters ; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness."

251, fol. As Mr. Rowe says: This description of the chief of the knights with his face marred by his sin recalls Milton's fine picture (*Par. Lost*, i., 599-602) of the chief of the fallen angels :

Darkened so, yet shone
Above them all the Archangel ; but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and care
Sat on his faded cheek.

260. which was her doom. 'Which brought her doom, her destruction upon her.'

264. in a smaller time. 'In an era less noble than that of Arthur.'

265. Cf. *In Memoriam*, lxi.: "Has made me kindlier with my kind."

271. fol. The "wordless man" and his story seem to be the invention of the poet himself. In Malory we find a single hint in the description of the arrival of the barge with the dead body (chap. xx.): "They found the fairest corpse lying in a rich bed, and a poor man sitting in the barge's end, and no word would he speak."

280. "The battle of *Mons Badonicus* is the only one of Arthur's battles mentioned by Gildas in his Latin *History of Britain*, and it is the only one which is recognized as definitely historical by modern historians. Thus Green, *Short History of the English People*, writes:—"It is certain that a victory of the Britons at Mount Badon in the year 520 checked the progress of the West Saxons, and was followed by a long pause in their advance'" (Rowe).

287. In this list of battles Tennyson follows the Latin *Historia Brittonum*, by Nennius, who wrote in the 8th or 9th century. The places mentioned are variously identified with modern sites.

289. loud was "wild" in the edition of 1859.

294-6. In the passage of Nennius referred to in the last note, it is said: "The eighth was near Gurnion castle, where Arthur bore the image of the Holy Virgin, mother of God, upon his shoulders, and through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Mary, put the Saxons to flight and pursued them the whole day with great slaughter." Mr. Littledale says, chap. xi.: "Geoffrey of Monmouth says that the picture of the blessed Mary was on Arthur's shield Priwen, in order to put him in mind of her. . . . Tennyson seems to have been thinking of the famous 'Russian emerald,' said to have been sent originally by Pilate to Tiberius. It is supposed to have the head of Christ carved upon it. . . . But the poet has taken the detail of the head on the cuirass from Spenser's *Arthur*:—

Athwart his breast a bauldrick brave he ware
That shined, like twinkling stars, with stones most pretious rare,
And in the midst thereof, one pretious stone,
Of wondrous worth, and eke of wondrous might,
Shapt like a ladie's head, exceeding shone."

294. cuirass. 'The armour that protected breast and back.'

296. lighten'd as he breathed. The light played upon it through the movements of his chest.

298. The emblem of the Saxons was a White Horse, Cf. *Guinevere*, 15 : "the Lords of the White Horse, Heathen, the brood by Hengist left."

305. 'Christ and Arthur' was their battle-cry ; cf. *Henry V.* iii., 1, 34 ; "Cry God for Harry, England, and Saint George."

315. **the fire of God.** 'A heaven-sent force and inspiration' ; cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 127, where Lancelot says to Arthur—

'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field.'

327. **make him cheer.** 'Entertain him in any fashion.'

330. **all was nature.** Elaine thought this tenderness was wholly the natural expression of feeling and not (as was the case) in part mere politeness.

333-7. Tennyson here indicates the incomparable superiority of a portrait by a great painter over a photograph, for example, which registers a single, and often transitory and uncharacteristic, expression of the features.

340. **rathe.** 'Early.' Hence comes the comparative rather. Cf. Milton, *Lycidas*, 142 : "Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies." *In Memoriam*, ex. : "The men of ripe and rather years."

340-1. Half deceiving herself with the pretext that the reason for her rising is to bid farewell to Lavaine.

349. **flattering.** 'Caressing.' According to the etymologists 'stroke,' 'pat' is the original signification of the word.

358. It was usual that the knights at tournaments should wear some gift of his lady-love as a token of her favour,—a glove, scarf, etc. Cf. *Henry V.*, iv., 7, 160 : "The glove which I have given him as a favour."

359. **She braved a riotous heart.** 'In spite of the flutterings of her heart which she could not control.'

360, fol. Cf. the passage from Malory quoted in note on l. 175.

384. **squire.** It was the business of the squire to carry his master's shield ; indeed the word means etymologically shield-bearer (from Lat. *scutum*, a shield).

394. **by—near.** In ed. of 1859 *in—by*.

398. **lived in fantasy.** These words repeated from l. 27 carry us back to the point at which the story broke off to tell how Elaine came to have the shield.

400. **the long backs,** etc. Very suggestive of the long undulations of the downs.

408. **The green light,** etc. An example of the poet's minute accuracy in the observation of nature.

409. **milky roofs.** The cave was scooped out of the chalky formation of which the downs of the South of England consist, cf. l. 405.

411. **noise.** This word is applied to pleasing sounds in *Tempest*, iii., 2 :—

the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.

Milton, *Hymn on the Nativity*, 97 ; Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, i., 12, 39, etc.

424. The Dragon was the symbol of royalty among the Britons (see ll. 434 fol., below), said to have been adopted by Uther, the father of Arthur, in consequence of having seen a fiery dragon in the heavens. Pendragon (literally, dragon's head) was a title given to Uther and his son.

425. There was a mystery connected with the birth of Arthur (see *Coming of Arthur*, 177, fol.), and also with his "passing"; there was a current idea that he should "come again." The mystery which exists in the old stories, Tennyson adapts to the symbolic meaning which he gives to the subject, Arthur representing the soul, the spiritual, the ideal.

432. **clear-faced.** "Fair of complexion; also, perhaps, with the added idea of frank openness of expression. Arthur was 'fair, Beyond the race of Britons and of men' (*The Coming of Arthur*, 329-330)" (Rowe). But see l. 1159.

433. **samite.** See on *Morte d'Arthur*, l. 31.

440-1. In the pattern, the forms of dragons gradually changed into other ornamental designs; such transitions may be observed in any piece of arabesque.

442. **tender.** 'Delicately wrought.'

448. **crescent.** 'Growing,' i.e., in knightly skill and fame; cf. l. 1400 below: "May not your crescent fear for name and fame," and *Hamlet* i., 3, 11: "For nature crescent does not grow alone in thews and bulk."

449-51. Mr. Churton Collins compares with these fine lines the famous saying of Socrates (Plato *Apology*, ix.): *ὁῖτος σοφώτατός ἐστιν ὅστις ἐγνώκειν ὅτι οὐδένος ἀξιώσ' ἐστί τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πρὸς σοφίαν.* (He is the wisest who knows that his wisdom is, in truth, worth nothing.)

455. **held the lists.** 'Stood on the defensive.'

466. Malory (xviii., 11) gives the following account :

"So these nine knights of Sir Lancelot's kin thrust in mightily, for they were all noble knights. And they, of great hate and despite that they had unto him, thought to rebuke that noble knight Sir Launcelot, and Sir Lavaine, for they knew them not. And so they came hurtling together, and smote down many knights of Northgalis and of Northumberland. And when Sir Launcelot saw them fare so, he gat a spear in his hand, and there encountered with him all at once Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel, and all they three smote him at once with their spears. And with force of themselves they smote Sir Launcelot's horse to the earth. And by misfortune Sir Bors smote Sir Launcelot through the shield into the side, and the spear brake, and the head left still in his side. When Sir Lavaine saw his master lie on the ground, he ran to the king of Scots, and smote him to the earth, and by great force he took his horse and brought him to Sir Launcelot, and maugre them all he made him to mount upon that horse. And then Sir Launcelot gat a spear in his hand, and there he smote Sir Bors horse and man to the earth. And then he smote Sir Bleoberis, etc. . . . And by this Sir Bors was horsed, and then he came with Sir Ector and Sir Lionel, and all they three smote with swords upon Sir Launcelot's helmet. And when he felt their buffets, and his wound, the which was so grievous, then he thought to do what he might while he might endure; and then he gave Sir Bors such a buffet that he made him bow his head passing low, and therewithal he rased off his helm, and might have slain him and so pulled him down. And in the same wise he served Sir Ector and Sir Lionel. For, as the book saith, he might have slain them, but when he saw their visages his heart might not serve him thereto, but left them there."

476-8. Cf. *The Last Tournament*, 648 :

For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
That ill to him is ill to them.

482. In the *Iliad*, xv., 381, and also 624 there are similar comparisons of the onset of battle with that of a wave. The "green-glimmering" is a characteristic touch of Tennyson's own close observation. "There was a period of my life," says the poet in his letter to Mr. Dawson, quoted in *A Study of the Princess*, "when, as an artist, Turner, for example, takes rough sketches of landscapes, etc., in order to work them eventually into some great picture, so I was in the habit of chronicling, in four or five words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque in Nature. I never put these down, and many a line has gone away on the north wind, but some remain, *e.g.*, in the 'Idylls of the King' :

With all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,

Suggestion: A storm which came upon us in the middle of the North Sea."

504-5. **Diamond me No diamonds.** A common form of expression in literature, cf. *Richard II.*, ii., 3, 87: "Grace me no grace nor uncle me no uncle." *Romeo and Juliet*, iii., 5, 153, etc.

504, fol. Cf. Malory, xviii., 12:

"Fair lords, I pray you that ye will suffer me to depart where me liketh, for I am sore hurt. I take none force of none honour, for I had lever to repose me than to be lord of all the world. And therewithal he groaned piteously, and rode a great gallop away-ward from them, until he came under a wood's side; and when he saw that he was from the field nigh a mile, and he was sure that he might not be seen, then he said with a high voice, O gentle knight Sir Lavaine, help me that this truncheon were out of my side, for it sticketh so sore that it nigh slayeth me. O mine own lord, said Sir Lavaine, I would fain do that might please you, but I dread me sore, and I draw out the truncheon, that ye shall be in peril of death. I charge you, said Sir Lancelot, as ye love me draw it out. And therewithal he descended from his horse, and right so did Sir Lavaine, and forthwith Sir Lavaine drew the truncheon out of his side. And he gave a great shriek, and a marvellous grisly groan, and his blood brast out nigh a pint at once, that at last he sank down, and so swooned pale and deadly."

515. **Sir Lancelot gave.** Originally the reading was "that other gave."

530, fol. In Malory, Arthur knows that the knight is Lancelot, having "espied him as he did walk in a garden beside the castle at Astolat." On hearing from his attendants that the victorious knight has probably received a mortal wound,

"Alas, said Arthur, how may this be? is he so hurt? What is his name? said King Arthur. Truly, said they all, we know not his name, nor from whence he came, nor whither he would. Alas, said the king, these be to me the worst tidings that came to me this seven year: for I could not for all the lands I hold, to know and wit it were so that the noble knight were slain. Know ye him? said they all. As for that, said Arthur, whether I know him or know him not, ye shall not know for me what man he is, but Almighty Jesu send me good tidings of him."

536-7. **Wherefore, rise, O Gawain.** In the ed. of 1859, the reading was: "Gawain, arise, my nephew." Professor Jones (*Growth of the Idylls of the King*, p. 144) notes the significance of this change in the reading. "In 1859, Arthur the king was a man and Modred and Gawain were his nephews. It is true that the poet has said that by Arthur he always meant the soul. However, with the introduction of the allegory into the later poems, the statement of his relationship to Modred and Gawain was omitted. Indeed an explicit denial of the relationship was introduced." At line 10 of *Guinevere*, Sir Modred was,

in the ed. of 1859, styled Arthur's nephew ; this is expunged from the present text. So in the same poem, l. 569, Arthur is now made to say :

I must strike against the man they call
My sister's son—no kin of mine.

where in the ed. of 1859 he said : "I must strike against my sister's son."

549-50. The diamond seems to have been fixed in one of the flowers which formed the design of the canopy (see ll. 443-4) where it formed a *flashing* or *glistening*, hence "restless" centre.

555. **Gawain.** Mr. Rowe (in his edition of *Lancelot and Elaine*) has the following note on Gawain :

Gawain's character is gradually and consistently developed in the *Idylls*. At first we have a bright, frank, impulsive boy : see *The Coming of Arthur*, 319-321 :—

"And Gawain went ; and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw."

Later (in *Gareth and Lynette*) he appears as a knight of brilliant achievements, for Gareth saw on the wall of Arthur's hall

"The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright,"

in token that he had done more than one "noble deed." Here (in *Lancelot and Elaine*) we find the first hint of the taint of disloyalty ; and below we are told that his famed courtesy, which gave him his surname of 'The Courteous,' was

"Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it."

In *The Holy Grail* his want of lofty aim and serious purpose is contrasted with his noisy impulsiveness, and we read that when the knights took the oath to ride a twelve-month and a day in quest of the Grail, "Gawain swore, and louder than the rest," but that soon, growing much wearied of the quest, he renounced it and spent the year in dalliance ; and how subsequently in "foolish words—A reckless and irreverent knight was he"—he ridiculed all such lofty enterprises. And, finally, in *Pelleas and Etarre*, although at first there flashed through Gawain's heart

"The fire of honour and all noble deeds,"

all noble impulse is dissipated by the first shock with sensual temptation. Although Pelleas already knows him for the one "whom men call light-of-love," he is induced to trust to his pledged troth, only to find himself treacherously betrayed :—

"Alas that ever knight should be so false."

It is only after Gawain's death that his spirit discovers and mourns the worthlessness of those earthly delights which in his lifetime he had put above loyalty and duty. We read in *The Passing of Arthur* (29-32), how

"There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling, 'Hollow, hollow, all delight.'"

The gradual lowering of Gawain's character is symbolic of that moral degradation of the whole order of the Round Table which spoiled the purpose of Arthur's life. The older chroniclers, before Malory, give Gawain a much nobler character. Geoffrey of Monmouth gives him the first place in the ranks of Arthur's army, his prowess obscuring that of Arthur himself. In many of the verse romances he is represented as the mirror of knightlyhood and courtesy. It is not till the later prose romances and the introduction of the spiritual Grail element that Gawain is deposed from this pride of place: in the *Percivale* he is reserved for "the rôle of dreadful example."

558. **and the child of Lot.** Originally read "of a crafty house."

558. Lot, King of Orkney, was husband of Bellicent, reputed sister of Arthur; he had three sons, Modred, Gawain, and Gareth. Lot was "traitor to the king. He fought against him in the Barons' wars" (*Gareth and Lynette*, 75-6). Modred followed his father's example, leagued himself with the "Lords of the White Horse" (*Gumecere*, 670), fought against Arthur in the great "battle in the west"—

smote his liege

Hard on the helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

—*Passing of Arthur.*

562. **concourse.** Note the unusual but earlier accentuation; cf. 'discoûrse,' 'recoûrse.' Milton accentuates 'concoûrse.'

569. **tarriance.** This form is found in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ii., 7, 90, and *Passionate Pilgrim*, 74.

595. **fine.** 'Fine-spun,' 'over-subtle.'

609. **Past.** In the ed. of 1859 "moved."

630. **a random.** In the ed. of 1859, "wildly."

633. **more at random.** In the ed. of 1859, "longer wildly."

646. This treachery is not found in Malory where Gawain's conduct towards Elaine is irreproachable.

657. **her.** "Originally 'him' for *her*, which was a slip, as the male bird was seldom used in hawking, the female being larger and stronger" (Rolfe).

hern. A form of *heron*; this shorter form is the one always employed by Tennyson, so in *The Brook*: "I come from haunts of coot and hern."

661. **an.** See note on l. 219.

662, fol. Cf. Malory, xviii., 14:

"Ah, mercy, said Sir Gawaine, now is my heart more heavier than ever it was tofore. Why? said Elaine. For I have great cause, said Sir Gawaine; is that knight that owneth this shield your love? Yea, truly, said she, my love he is, God would I were his love. Truly, said Sir Gawaine, fair damsel, ye have right, for, and he be your love, ye love the most honourable knight of the world, and the man of most worship. So me thought ever, said the damsel, for never, or that time, for no knight that ever I saw loved I never none erst. God grant, said Sir Gawaine, that either of you may rejoice other, but that is in a great adventure. But truly, said Sir Gawaine unto the damsel, ye may say ye have a fair grace, for why, I have known that noble knight this four and twenty year, and never or that day I nor none other knight, I dare make it good, saw nor heard say that ever he bare token or sign of no lady, gentlewoman, nor maiden, at no justs nor tournament. And therefore, fair maiden, said Sir Gawaine, ye are much beholden to him to give him thanks. But I dread me, said Sir Gawaine, that ye shall never see him in this world, and that is great pity that ever was of earthly knight. Alas, said she, how may this be? Is he slain? I say not so, said Sir Gawaine, but wit ye well, he is grievously wounded, by all manner of signs, and by men's sight more likely to be dead then to be on live; and wit ye well he is the noble knight Sir Launcelot, for by this shield I know him. Alas, said the fair maiden of Astolat, how may this be, and what was his hurt? Truly, said Sir Gawaine, the man in the world that loved him best hurt him so, and I dare say, said Sir Gawaine, and that knight that hurt him knew the very certainty that he had hurt Sir Launcelot, it would be the most sorrow that ever came to his heart. Now, fair father, said then Elaine, I require you give me leave to ride and to seek him, or else I wot well I shall go out of my mind, for I shall never stint till that I find him and my brother Sir Lavaine. Do as it liketh you, said her father, for me right sore repenteth of the hurt of that noble knight. Right so the maid made her ready, and before Sir Gawaine making great dole. Then on the morn Sir Gawaine came to king Arthur, and told him how he had found Sir Launcelot's shield in the keeping of the fair maiden of Astolat. All that knew I aforehand, said king Arthur, and that caused me I would not suffer you to have ado at the great justs: for I espied, said king Arthur, when he came in till his lodging, full late in the evening in Astolat. But marvel have I, said Arthur, that ever he would bear any sign of any damsel: for, or [before] now, I never heard say nor knew that ever he bare any token of none earthly woman. By my head, said Sir Gawaine, the fair maiden of Astolat loveth him marvellously well; what it meaneth I cannot say; and she is ridden after to seek him. So the king and all came to London, and there Sir Gawaine openly dislosed to all the court that it was Sir Launcelot that justed best."

664. Ramp in the field. *Ramp* is the technical term in heraldry to describe an animal on its hind feet in the posture of attack; *field* is the heraldic term for the general surface of the shield, the background of the emblazoury.

669. ye know it. 'You know that I imagine you love Lancelot.'

670. waste myself in vain. 'By trying to win your love which is already Lancelot's.'

678. I know there is. In ed. of 1859, "Metbinks there is."

687. **Nay—like enow.** In ed. of 1859, "May it be so."

720. **For twenty strokes of the blood.** 'While his heart beat twenty times.'

733. **aim.** In the ed. of 1859, "point."

Marr'd—tranquillity. The old dame had hoped that the news would produce an exhibition of the Queen's feelings.

791, fol. Cf. *Malory*, xviii., 15 :

"By fortune Sir Lavaine was ridden to play him, to enchafe his horse. And anon as Elaine saw him she knew him, and then she cried onloud until him. And when he heard her, anon he came to her ; and then she asked her brother ; How did my lord Sir Launcelet ? Who told you sister that my lord's name was Launcelet ? Then she told him how Sir Gawaine by his shield knew him. So they rode together till they came to the hermitage, and anon she alight. So Sir Lavaine brought her to Sir Launcelet. And when she saw him lie so sick and pale in his bed, she might not speak, but suddenly she fell to the earth down suddenly in a swoon, and there she lay a great while. And when she was relieved she sighed, and said, My lord Sir Launcelet, alas, why be ye in this plight ? and then she swooned again. And then Sir Launcelet prayed Sir Lavaine to take her up,—And bring her to me. And when she came to herself, Sir Launcelet kissed her, and said, Fair maiden, why fare ye thus ? Ye put me to pain ; wherefore make ye no more such cheer, for, and ye be come to comfort me, ye be right welcome, and of this little hurt that I have, I shall be right hastily whole, by the grace of God. But I marvel, said Sir Launcelet, who told you my name."

799. **in his moods.** 'In one of the moody fits to which he was subject.' Cf. *Maud I.*, xiv. : "What ! am I raging alone as my father raged in his mood ?"

800. For a description of the gate, see *Gareth and Lynette*, 209-226.

801. **mystically.** 'In such a way as to symbolize a deeper meaning.'

812. **battle-writhen.** This characteristically Tennysonian phrase seems to mean 'with the knotted sinews developed through their constant use in battle.'

844. **weirdly-sculptured.** In ed. of 1859, "wildly-sculptured"—doubtless a misprint.

849. **either twilight.** Cf. *Edwin Morris* :

To some full music rose and sank the sun,
And some full music seem'd to move and change
With all the varied changes of the dark,
And either twilight and the day between.

856. **forebore him.** 'Was patient with him' ; cf. *Ephesians*, iv., 2 : "with long suffering, forbearing one another in love."

856, fol. Cf. Malory, xviii., 15: "So this maiden, Elaine, never went from Sir Lancelot, but watched him day and night, and did such attendance to him that the French book saith there was never woman did more kindlier for a man than she."

862. **simples.** 'Medicinal plants'; a common meaning of the word, see *Romeo and Juliet*, v. 1, 40, *Merry Wives*, i., 4, 65, etc.

876. He was pledged by his honour to his dishonourable love for Guinevere.

882. **bright.** In ed. of 1859, "sweet."

885. **that ghostly grace.** The visionary beauty referred to in l. 882.

888. See ll. 854-5.

903. **burthen.** 'The refrain of a song'; So in the stage direction to the song in *As You Like It*, iv., 2: "The rest shall bear this burden," and in *Enoch Arden*, 792:

Beating it in upon his weary brain
As tho' it were the burthen of a song.

910. This refers to the practice of putting garlands of flowers upon victims to be sacrificed at the altar; cf. Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

919. There was a popular notion that a ghost could not speak unless first spoken to; cf. *Hamlet*, I., 1, 45.

929. Cf. Malory, xviii., 19:

"My lord Sir Launcelot, now I see ye will depart, now, fair knight and courteous knight, have mercy upon me, and suffer me not to die for thy love. What would ye that I did? said Sir Launcelot. I would have you to my husband, said Elaine. Fair damsel, I thank you, said Sir Launcelot, but, truly, said he, I cast me never to be wedded man. Then, fair knight, said she, will ye be my love? Jesu defend me, said Sir Launcelot, for then I rewarded to your father and your brother full evil for their great goodness. Alas, said she, then must I die for your love. Ye shall not so, said Sir Launcelot, for wit ye well, fair maiden, I might have been married and I had would, but I never applied me to be married yet. But because, fair damsel, that ye love me as ye say ye do, I will, for your good will and kindness, shew you some goodness, and that is this; that wheresoever ye will beset your heart upon some good knight that will wed you, I shall give you together a thousand pound yearly, to you and to your heirs. Thus much will I give you, fair maiden, for your kindness, and always while I live to be your own knight. Or all this, said the maiden, I will none, for

but if ye will wed me, or else be my lover, wit ye well, Sir Lancelot, my good day: are done. Fair damsel, said Sir Lancelot, of these two things ye must pardon me. Then she shrieked shrilly, and fell down in a swoon."

Stopford Brooke remarks here: "She rises to the very verge of innocent maidenliness in passionate love, but she does not go over the verge. And to be on the verge, and not to pass beyond it, is the very peak of innocent girlhood when seized by overmastering love. It was as difficult to represent Elaine as to represent Juliet; and Tennyson has succeeded well where Shakespeare has succeeded beautifully. It is great praise, but it is well deserved."

942. **To interpret ear and eye.** 'To draw conclusions as to what the things which it hears or sees, mean.'

943. **blare.** 'Blow abroad,' properly of trumpets, cf. *Welcome to Alexandra*: "Warble, O bugle, and trumpet blare."

958. Lancelot's ancestral domain was in France—"Benwick, some men call it Bayonne, and some men call it Beaune" (see Malory, xx., 18).

999-1003. Mr. Churton Collins says (p. 147): "This passage is an admirable illustration of Tennyson's power of transfusing the very essence of Virgil into English," and cites *Aeneid*, iv., 460-3:

Hinc exaudiri voces et verba vocantis
Visa viri, nox cum terras obscura teneret;
Solaque culminibus feraci carmine bubo
Saepe queri et longas in fletum ducere voces.

1002. **sallow-rifted glooms.** 'The darkness broken by patches of pallid light.'

1006. **make** in earlier English is the technical phrase for the composition of poetry; and poets were called *makers*: this, indeed, is the meaning of the Greek word ποιητής from which the word 'poet' is derived.

1007. Songs of similar form are found repeatedly in the "Idylls of the King" (see *Marriage of Geraint*, 347, *Coming of Arthur*, 451, *Merlin and Vivien*, 355, *Guinevere*, 166, *Gareth and Lynette*, 974, 1034, etc.; the third lines of the stanzas rhyme in the song before us and in the *Marriage of Geraint*, elsewhere all the stanzas have merely similar endings. The three line stanzas may have been suggested by the Welsh Triads. "The most ancient of the Cimbrian Rards wrote in stanzas of three rhyming lines. . . . each line containing seven syllables. Hence are said to have sprung the Welsh Triads which contained the Cymric systems of theology, ethics, history, jurisprudence and Bardism" (Rowe). A more exact imitation of these Triads is to be found at line 402 of *The Coming of Arthur*, where Merlin speaks "In riddling triplets of old time," each stanza consisting of three lines rhyming together.

1022-3. Phantoms that give notice of death in particular families are common in tradition. In Ireland such an apparition in the form of a woman is called a 'Benshee.'

1026. **shrilling.** Tennyson is fond of using *shrill* as a verb, cf. *Passing of Arthur*, 34, 42, *Talking Oak*, 68, *Enoch Arden*, 178.

1055. **muse at me.** Cf. *Macbeth*, iii., 4, 85: "Do not muse at me, my most worthy friend," *King John*, iii., 1, 317: "I muse your majesty doth seem so cold."

1068. **an.** See note on l. 219.

1091. **pass.** 'Die'; cf. the expression 'the passing bell,' and *In Memoriam*, lvii.:

The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever look'd with human eyes.

1099, fol. Cf. Malory, xviii., 19:

"Now speak we of the fair maiden of Astolat, that made such sorrow day and night, that she never slept, eat, nor drank; and ever she made her complaint unto Sir Launcelot. So when she had thus endured a ten days, that she feeble so that she must needs pass out of this world, then she shrived her clean, and received her Creator. And ever she complained still upon Sir Launcelot. Then her ghostly father bade her leave such thoughts. Then she said, Why should I leave such thoughts? am I not an earthly woman? and all the while the breath is in my body I may complain me, for my belief is I do none offence though I love an earthly man, and I take God to my record I never loved none but Sir Launcelot du Lake, nor never shall; and a pure maiden I am for him and for all other. And since it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for the love of so noble a knight, I beseech the High Father of heaven to have mercy upon my soul, and upon mine innumerable pains that I suffered may be allegiance of part of my sins. For sweet Lord Jesu, said the fair maiden, I take thee to record, on thee I was never great offender against thy laws, but that I loved this noble knight Sir Launcelot out of measure, and of myself, good Lord, I might not withstand the fervent love wherefore I have my death. And then she called her father Sir Bernard, and her brother Sir Tirre, and heartily she prayed her father that her brother might write a letter like as she did indite it; and so her father granted her. And when the letter was written word by word like as she devised, then she prayed her father that she might be watched until she were dead,—And while my body is hot, let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until that I be cold, and let me be put in a fair bed, with all the richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed, and all my richest clothes, be laid with me in a chariot unto the next place where Thames is, and there let me be put within a barget, and but one man with me, such as ye trust to steer me thither, and that my barget be covered with black samite, over and over. Thus, father, I beseech you, let it be done. So her father granted it her faithfully, all things should be done like as she had devised. Then her father and her brother made great dole, for, when this was done, anon she died. And so when she was dead, the corpse, and the bed, all was led the next way unto Thames, and there a man, and the corpse, and all, were put into Thames, and so the man steered the barget unto Westminster, and there he rowed a great while to and fro or any espied it."

1101. **ghostly man.** ‘A *spiritual* man,’ ‘a priest’; cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, iii., 3, 49: “Being a divine, a ghostly confessor,” and the communion service in the *Book of Common Prayer*; “He may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice.”

1138. **with bent brows.** ‘The brows contracted in grief,’ cf. *Aylmer’s Field*, 625: “Long o’er his bent brows linger’d Averil.” To bend the brows was originally to arch the eyebrows, later to knit the brow or frown (*New English Dictionary*). Mr. Rowe interprets this “with bowed heads,” and Mr. Webb similarly interprets the passage in *Aylmer’s Field*.

1140-1. Note the season; the various Idylls are assigned to appropriate seasons of the year.

1142. **samite.** See note on *Morte d’Arthur*, l. 31.

1154. **Oar’d.** In the ed. of 1859, “steer’d.”

1167. **for.** “*For*, like γάρ in Greek and *enim* in Latin, often begins a promised story. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 184, *The Passing of Arthur*, 6” (Rowe).

1176. **parted.** For ‘departed’; cf. Gray’s *Elegy*, ll. 1 and 89.

1177. **oriel.** ‘A projecting window.’

1185. **Is tawnier than her cygnet’s.** A cygnet is a young swan which is of a dark, bluish-gray colour.

1213. **lost your own.** Sc. ‘worth.’

1214-15. So Ophelia thought (*Hamlet*, III., 1):

Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

1238. **disdain.** In ed. of 1859, “disgust.”

1257-9. The idea of a second coming is connected with several popular heroes, Charlemagne, Barbarossa, etc.; and Malory says, xxi., 7: “Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but lived by the will of our Lord Jesu in another place. And men say that he will come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life. But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse:

‘Hic jacet Arthurus Rex quondam rexque futurus.’”

In the *Idylls* such a belief in regard to Arthur is repeatedly referred to. In *The Coming of Arthur*, 420, we are told that Merlin has said :

Tho' men may wound him, that he will not die
But pass to come again.

In *Gareth and Lynette*, 199, it is rumoured—

that this King is not the King
But only changeling out of Fairyland.

1262. Hitherto his face had been seen in profile only, now he turned his full-face towards the bank.

1264-5. For Sir Percivale and Sir Galahad see *The Holy Grail*. Both were distinguished among the Knights of the Round Table for their purity. Sir Galahad (see the poem so entitled) alone saw the Grail on its first appearance at Camelot. Sir Percivale "Whom Arthur and his knighthood called The Pure," was partially successful in the quest of the Grail, and afterwards

pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an Abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after died.

1268. Cf. the concluding stanza of *The Lady of Shalott*.

1272, fol. Cf. Malory, xviii., 20 :

"And this was the intent of the letter:—Most noble knight, Sir Launcelot, now hath death made us two at debate for your love; I was your lover, that men called the fair maiden of Astolat; therefore unto all ladies I make my moan; yet pray for my soul, and bury me at the least, and offer ye my mass-penny. This is my last request. And a clean maiden I died, I take God to witness. Pray for my soul, Sir Launcelot, as thou art peerless.—This was all the substance in the letter. And when it was read the king, the queen, and all the knights wept for pity of the doleful complaints. Then was Sir Launcelot sent for. And when he was come, king Arthur made the letter to be read to him; and when Sir Launcelot heard it word by word, he said, My lord Arthur, wit ye well I am right heavy of the death of this fair damsel. God knoweth I was never causer of her death by my willing, and that will I report me to her own brother; here he is, Sir Lavaine. I will not say nay, said "Sir Launcelot, but that she was both fair and good, and much I was beholden unto her, but she loved me out of measure. Ye might have shewed her, said the queen, some bounty and gentleness, that might have preserved her life. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, she would none other way be answered, but that she would be my wife, or else my love, and of these two I would not grant her; but I proffered her, for her good love that she showed me, a thousand pound yearly to her and to her heirs, and to wed any manner knight that she could find best to love in her heart. For madam, said Sir Launcelot, I love not to be constrained to love; for love must arise of the heart, and not by no constraint. That is truth, said the king, and many knights: love is free in himself, and never will be bounden; for where he is bounden he loseth himself.

Then said the king unto Sir Lancelot, It will be your worship that ye oversee that she be interred worshipfully. Sir, said Sir Lancelot, that shall be done as I can best devise. And so many knights went thither to behold that fair maiden. And so upon the morn she was interred richly, and Sir Lancelot offered her mass-penny, and all the knights of the Table Round that were there at that time offered with Sir Lancelot. And then the poor man went again with the target. Then the Queen sent for Sir Lancelot, and prayed him for mercy, for why she had been wroth with him causeless. This is not the first time, said Sir Lancelot, that ye have been displeased with me causeless; but, madam, ever I must suffer you, but what sorrow I endure I take no force."

1324. **joyance.** An antique and poetical word, found in Spenser, etc.

1327. **worship.** 'Honour'—the word is Malory's; see passage quoted in note to l. 1272, and cf. l. 110 and note.

1330. **that shrine.** According to Malory (see passage quoted in the note on l. 1099), this was Westminster Abbey, or rather the church that stood on the site, built by Sebert, King of the West Saxons in the seventh century.

1344. **blazon'd.** See note on l. 9.

1354-7. In the ed. of 1859, these lines read :

But Arthur who beheld his cloudy brows
Approach'd him, and with full affection flung
One arm about his neck, and spake and said,
'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
Most love and most affiance.'

1357. **affiance.** 'Trust,' 'confidence,' so in Shakespeare, *Henry V.*, ii., 2, 127, and in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the petition for the Queen, "that she may evermore have affiance in thee."

1365. In the ed. of 1859, instead of this line we have :

For the wild people say wild things of thee.

The new line is not only superior poetically to the one it replaces, but, as Professor Jones says (p. 146), makes Arthur "less liable to the charge of obtuseness in that he is not represented as closing his ears to testimony, but is represented rather as attributing to homelessness the trouble in the eyes."

1400. **crescent.** See note on l. 448; the 'erescent moon' is also in the speaker's mind.

1404-7. In the ed. of 1859, these lines read :

Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Stole from his mother—as the story runs—
She chanted snatches of mysterious song.

The change is evidently caused by the increasing importance of the symbolism in the mind of Tennyson, as the *Idylls* grew. "In 1859, when there was no thought of making the Lady of the Lake symbolical of religion, she was merely one of the fairies whose custom was to 'steal babies,' and she 'stole' Lancelot from his mother's arms and chanted snatches of 'mysterious songs.' But with the change in the conception of the *Lady of the Lake* in 1869, this description was no longer congruous" (Prof. Jones, p. 143).

1410. "I will thou wit and know that I am Launcelot du Lake, King Barr's son of Benwicke, and very knight of the Table Round" (Malory, vi., 8).

1419-20. **a man Not after Arthur's heart.** Cf. *I. Samuel*, viii., 14: "the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart."

1421. **without.** The use of "without" as a conjunction is usually regarded as a vulgarity. Such use is, however, occasionally found in good writers, especially of an earlier date: see, for example, *Much Ado About Nothing*, iii., 3, 86.

1429. **die a holy man.** In Malory, xvi., 5, we find it said of Lancelot, "yet shall he die right an holy man"; and in chap. 12 of the last book, there is a description of his holy end.

TO VIRGIL.

Published in the *Nineteenth Century* for November 1882, and included in *Tiresias and Other Poems*, 1885.

"Tennyson," says Professor Tyrrel, "gave a crowning instance of his insight into the character and genius of Latin poetry when, in the poem on Virgil, he sang of 'All the chosen,' etc., and 'All the charm of all the Muses,'" etc. Tennyson's appreciation for Virgil was doubtless helped by a certain kinship between the genius of the two poets. Some sentences from Professor H. Nettleship's *Virgil (Classical Writers Series)* will serve to indicate points of contact. Speaking of Virgil and Horace, Prof. Nettleship says: "They practically laid down the principle that no amount of labour could be too great to expend on poetical expression" (p. 17); "The elaboration of [Virgil's] style would

lead us to expect that he was a slow worker, and this appears to have been really the case" (p. 76); "Unquestionably it was Virgil's style which more than anything else gave him his pre-eminence among Roman poets" (p. 90); "It will not be disputed that the great power of Virgil's style lies in the haunting music of the verse, in the rhythm and fall of his language" (p. 91); "A hundred passages might easily be quoted which echo, with exquisite music and subtle alliteration, the voices of priests and of waters, whether the roar of the sea or the murmur of them" (p. 102).

1. **Virgil** was born at Andes, a small village near Mantua, B.C. 70, and died 19 A.D.

thou that singest, etc., namely in the *Æneid* which describes the fall of Ilium (or Troy); Aeneas's filial care for his father, Anchises, whom he bore from the burning city on his shoulders; his meeting with Dido Queen of Carthage, their love and her self-destruction when Aeneas left her; his arrival in Italy, his wars there, and the foundation of Rome.

6. **he that sang the Works and Days**, viz. Hesiod, an early Greek poet, who wrote a poem entitled 'Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι (Works and Days) containing ethical, economical, and political precepts.

9-10. The reference is to Virgil's *Georgics*, a poem which, in four books, treats of the various occupations of a farmer indicated in these lines.

11-12. Cardinal Newman speaks of Virgil's "single words and phrases, his pathetic half-lines giving utterance, as the voice of Nature herself, to that pain and weariness yet hope of better things which is the experience of her children in every time."

13-20. These lines refer to Virgil's *Eclogues*, a series of pastoral poems.

Tityrus is a shepherd who appears as an interlocutor in *Eclogue*, i.

15. **the poet-satyr** is Silenus; in *Eclogue*, vi., he sings in response to the desire of two shepherds who had bound him with flowery garlands.

17. **the Pollio**. The fourth *Eclogue*, called "the Pollio," because in it Virgil addresses Asinius Pollio, who was consul at the time the poem was written (B.C. 40). The *Pollio* sings the coming of a golden age, which is connected with the birth of some mysterious child. In this new age the earth will bring forth without tillage, serpents and poisonous plants will perish, men will cease to go forth on the sea in boats, peace and

innocence will reign. The resemblance to some of the prophecies of Isaiah (*e.g.*, cf. chap. xi., 1-9) has drawn special attention to this *Eclogue*, and suggested Pope's *Messiah*.

21-22. Virgil's doctrine of a universal mind present in, and animating all nature (cf. Wordsworth's *Lines Written above Tintern Abbey*) is given in *Aeneid*, vi., 724-751, which begins :

Principio caelum ac terras camposque liquentes
Lucentemque globum Lunae Titaniaque astra
Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus
Mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet.

("First, the sky and earth and watery plains, and the moon's bright sphere, and Titan's stars, a spirit feeds within ; and a mind instilled throughout the limbs, gives energy to the whole mass, and mingles with the mighty body.") See also *Georgic*, iv., 222 :

deum namque ire per omnes
Terrasque, tractusque maris caelumque profundum.

23-24. "It is in the expression of this weariness and deep longing for rest, in making others feel his own sense of the painful toil and mystery of life and of the sadness of death, his sense, too, of vague yearning for some fuller and ampler being, that Virgil produces his most powerful effect by the use of the simplest words in their simplest application." (Sellar's *Virgil*.)

25-28. Tennyson has in his mind the description (in *Aeneid*, Bk. vi., 125 fol.) of the descent of Aeneas to the lower world, carrying in his hand a golden branch which he was to offer to Proserpine and so visit the dead in safety.

29. **thy Forum.** The market place of Rome and the scene of her great political assemblages.

33. In 1870, Rome became the capital of the modern and constitutional monarchy of Italy, and the long struggle for nationality and free government was at length successful.

first published in 1884 in an American periodical, The Youth's Companion ; included in Tirrsias and Other Poems, pub. 1885.

EARLY SPRING.

First published in 1884 in an American periodical, *The Youth's Companion* ; included in *Tirrsias and Other Poems*, pub. 1885.

6. The reader may turn to Tennyson's poem entitled *The Thristle* for a representation of the thristle as an expression of the spirit of the spring.

7. a door. Subject of "opens."

10. greening. 'Growing green'; this use of a verb "green" is uncommon in English; cf. Whittier, *Flowers in Winter*. The corresponding German verb grünen is very common.

17. stars. 'Starlike flowers'; probably the reference is to the Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) with its white blossoms which appear in large numbers in British woods in April and May.

21-24. 'The low sound of the waves on the shore in calm weather.'

31. Compare with the thought of this stanza, '*Tears, idle tears*,' Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*. There is a vague suggestiveness about various objects, sounds, smells in nature, subtle associations of thought and feeling of which we are but half-conscious:

Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams
Of something felt like something here
Of something done, I know not where,
Such as no language may declare.

—*The Two Voices*.

34. fell. 'A ridge or hill.'

37-38. The bird addressed is doubtless the blackbird; "when disturbed it flies off with a somewhat magpie-like *chuckle*; its familiar flight along the hedges is *wavering and fitful* and in the breeding season the female especially moves by a *succession of starts*....It pairs very early in spring" (*Chambers' Encyclopedia*).

39-42. The poetic fancy is stirred by external nature, and begins to ring out its word-chimes.

FREEDOM.

First published in *Macmillan's Magazine* for December, 1884, subsequently included in *Teresias and Other Poems*, 1885. This poem should be compared with "*Of old sat Freedom*" and "*Love thou thy land*." It gives expression to the distrust and dislike which the poet felt for some of the popular tendencies making themselves conspicuous during his later years. There is not a difference in opinion, but a difference in tone, between this and the earlier poems: there is more of hopefulness and kindliness in the earlier works, more of distrust and bitterness in the later.

3. **inform'd.** 'Gave vitality to,' 'animated.' Cf. Sir T. Browne, *Religio Medici*, Pt. I., xii. : "If one soul were so perfect as to inform three distinct bodies, that were a petty trinity."

3. **Parthenon.** The famous temple of Athene in Athens.

4. **The glittering Capitol.** The temple of Jupiter in Rome; the gates were of bronze, and the ceilings and tiles gilt.

7. **here.** 'In England.' Cf. the similar contrast of English and southern climates in the first stanza of "*You ask me why.*"

9-12. Freedom was less noble and majestic as exhibited at Athens and Rome than in Britain, because in the former cases it coexisted with slavery.

13. **the Vision.** What the Vision is, the poet explains below : "a dream of knowledge fusing," etc. Cf. "*Of old sat Freedom,*" l. 16 : "Her open eyes desire the truth."

17-20. This stanza was not in the poem as originally printed.

23. **Her Human Star.** 'The Earth.'

25. Cf. "*Love thou thy land,*" ll. 27-30.

27-28. 'When the nations attain some foolish or evil end by bloodshed.'

33-40. The occasion and point of the whole poem is indicated in these stanzas. The poet seems to have been aroused to a reassertion of what he conceives true freedom to be, by the socialistic and anarchistic tendencies of the later democracy. In the poet's opinion the advocates of these and such doctrines, would destroy instead of establishing freedom; they lack both knowledge and reverence, and the patience to await that slow development which is the law of the universe (cf. "*Love thou thy land,*" ll. 37-40, 65-68, 93-96).

CROSSING THE BAR.

First published in *Demeter and Other Poems*, 1889.

This poem is a good example of the suggestiveness of poetic expression, through the use of picturesque language, and of the complete involution of the two members of a simile, so that the poet and reader do not separate, even in thought, the fundamental ideas and the picturesque

objects which embody these. The idea of soul coming from and passing again into 'the great deep' was an old one with the poet. Arthur, in the *Idylls*, comes from the sea and passes away on the great water; "From the great deep to the great deep he goes," says Merlin. Again in the *Epilogue to In Memoriam* :

A soul shall draw from out the vast
And strike his being into bounds,

and more strikingly in *De Profundis* :

Out of the deep my child, out of the deep
To that last deep where we and thou are still.

3. **bar.** 'The sand bar which separates the harbour from the open sea.'

13. **bourne.** This word is suggested by, and carries with it, the associations of its use by Hamlet in his famous soliloquy when he speaks of "the bourne from which no traveller returns."

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

SELECTIONS FOR "SIGHT" READING.

I.—SONG FOR SAINT CECILIA'S DAY.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony
 This universal frame began.
When Nature underneath a heap
 Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head, 5
The tuneful voice was heard from high :
 "Arise ye more than dead !"
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry
In order to their stations leap,
And Music's power obey. 10
From harmony, from heavenly harmony
 This universal frame began :
 From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in Man. 15

What passion cannot Music raise and quell ?
 When Jubal struck the chorded shell,
His listening brethren stood around,
 And, wondering, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound. 20
Less than a God they thought there could not dwell
 Within the hollow of that shell
 That spoke so sweetly and so well.
What passion cannot Music raise and quell ?

The trumpet's loud clangour 25
 Excites us to arms,
With shrill notes of anger
 And mortal alarms.

APPENDIX.

The double double double beat Of the thundering drum	30
Cries, "Hark ! the foes come ; Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat !"	
The soft complaining flute In dying notes discovers The woes of hopeless lovers,	35
Whose dirge is whispered by the warbling lute.	
Sharp violins proclaim Their jealous pangs and desperation, Fury, frantic indignation, Depth of pains, and height of passion	40
For the fair disdainful dame.	
But O, what art can teach, What human voice can reach The sacred organ's praise ? Notes inspiring holy love,	45
Notes that wing their heavenly ways To mend the choirs above.	
Orpheus could lead the savage race, And trees uprooted left their place Sequeious of the lyre ;	50
But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher ; When to her organ vocal breath was given, An angel heard, and straight appeared— Mistaking Earth for Heaven !	
As from the power of sacred lays The spheres began to move, And sung the great Creator's praise To all the blest above ;	55
So, when the last and dreadful hour This crumbling pageant shall devour,	60
The Trumpet shall be heard on high, The dead shall live, the living die, And Music shall untune the sky.	

—Dryden.

2.—ODE TO EVENING.

2.—ODE TO EVENING.

If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear (Like thy own solemn springs, Thy springs and dying gales);	
O Nymph reserved,—while now the bright-haired Sun Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts With brede ethereal wove, O'erhang his wavy bed,	5
Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing, Or where the beetle winds His small but sullen horn,	10
As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path, Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum,— Now teach me, Maid composed, To breathe some softened strain,	15
Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale, May not unseemly with its stillness suit, As, musing slow, I hail Thy genial, loved return!	20
For when thy folding-star arising shows His paly circlet, at his warning lamp The fragrant Hours, and Elves Who slept in buds the day,	
And many a Nymph who wreathes her brow with sedge, And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still, The pensive Pleasures sweet, Prepare thy shadowy car.	25
Then let me rove some wild and heathy scene, Or find some ruin 'midst its dreary dells, Whose walls more awful nod By thy religious gleams.	30

Or if chill blustering winds or driving rain Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut That from the mountain-side Views wilds, and swelling floods,	35
And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires, And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all Thy dewy fingers draw The gradual dusky veil.	40
While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont, And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve ! While Summer loves to sport Beneath thy lingering light !	
While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves ; Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air, Affrights thy shrinking train, And rudely rends thy robes :	45
So long, regardful of thy quiet rule, Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, smiling Peace, Thy gentlest influence own, And love thy favourite name !	50

—*W. Collins.*

3.—INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVENTH BOOK OF PARADISE LOST.

Descend from Heav'n, Urania, by that name If rightly thou art call'd, whose voice divine Following, above th' Olympian hill I soar, Above the flight of Pegasean wing. The meaning, not the name I call : for thou Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top Of old Olympus dwell'st, but Heav'nly born, Before the hills appear'd, or fountain flow'd, Thou with eternal Wisdom didst converse, Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play In presence of th' Almighty Father, pleas'd	5 10
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4.—SONNET.

With thy celestial song. Up led by thee,
 Into the Heav'n of Heav'ns I have presum'd,
 An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air,
 Thy tempering ; with like safety guided down, 15
 Return me to my native element :
 Lest from this flying steed unrein'd (as once
 Bellerophon, though from a lower clime)
 Dismounted, on th' Aleian field I fall,
 Erroneous there to wander and forlorn. 20
 Half yet remains unsung, but narrower bound
 Within the visible diurnal sphere ;
 Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,
 More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchang'd
 To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days, 25
 On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues ;
 In darkness, and with dangers compass'd round,
 And solitude ; yet not alone, while thou
 Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or when morn
 Purples the east : still govern thou my song, 30
 Urania, and fit audience find, though few.
 But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
 Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race
 Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
 In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears 35
 To rapture, till the savage clamour drown'd
 Both harp and voice ; nor could the Muse defend
 Her son. So fail not thou, who thee implores :
 For thou art Heav'nly, she an empty dream.

—*Milton.*

4.—SONNET.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
 Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year !
 My hasting days fly on with full career,
 But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
 Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth, 5
 That I to manhood am arrived so near,
 And inward ripeness doth much less appear
 That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.
 Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,

It shall be still in strictest measure even 10
 To that same lot, however mean or high,
 Toward which time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,
 As ever in my great Task-master's eye. —Milton.

5.—TO CYRIACK SKINNER.

Cyriack, whose grandsire on the royal bench
 Of British Themis, with no mean applause,
 Pronounced, and in his volumes taught, our laws,
 Which others at their bar so often wrench, 5
 To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
 In mirth that after no repenting draws ;
 Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause,
 And what the Swede intend, and what the French.
 To measure life learn thou betimes, and know 10
 Toward solid good what leads the nearest way ;
 For other things mild Heaven a time ordains,
 And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
 That with superfluous burden loads the day,
 And, when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains. —Milton.

6.—SONNET.

CXVI.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove : 5
 O no ! it is an ever-fixed mark
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken ;
 It is the star to every wandering bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks 10
 Within his bending sickle's compass come ;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error, and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved. —Shakespeare.

7.—A DROP OF DEW.

7.—A DROP OF DEW.

See, how the orient dew,
 Shed from the bosom of the morn,
 Into the blowing roses,
 (Yet careless of its mansion new,
 For the clear region where 'twas born,) 5
 Round in itself incloses
 And, in its little globe's extent,
 Frames, as it can, its native element.
 How it the purple flower does slight,
 Scarce touching where it lies ; 10
 But gazing back upon the skies,
 Shines with a mournful light,
 Like its own tear,
 Because so long divided from the sphere.
 Restless it rolls, and unsecure, 15
 Trembling lest it grow impure ;
 Till the warm sun pities its pain,
 And to the skies exhales it back again.
 So the soul, that drop, that ray,
 Of the clear fountain of eternal day, 20
 Could it within the human flower be seen,
 Remembering still its former height,
 Shuns the sweet leaves, and blossoms green,
 And recollecting its own light,
 Does, in its pure and circling thoughts, express 25
 The greater heaven in a heaven less.
 In how coy a figure wound,
 Every way it turns away,
 So the world excluding round,
 Yet receiving in the day, 30
 Dark beneath, but bright above,
 Here disdaining, there in love.
 How loose and easy hence to go ;
 How girt and ready to ascend ;
 Moving but on a point below, 35
 It all about does upwards bend.

Such did the manna's sacred dew distil,
 White and entire, although congealed and chill ;
 Congealed on earth ; but does, dissolving, run
 Into the glories of the almighty sun. 40

—*A. Marvell.*

8.—TO ———

Look at the fate of summer flowers,
 Which blow at daybreak, droop ere evensong ;
 And, grieved for their brief date, confess that ours,
 Measured by what we are and ought to be,
 Measured by all that, trembling, we foresee, 5
 Is not so long !

If human Life do pass away,
 Perishing more swiftly than the flower,
 If we are creatures of a *winter's* day ;
 What space hath Virgin's beauty to disclose 10
 Her sweets, and triumph o'er the breathing rose ?
 Not even an hour !

The deepest grove whose foliage hid
 The happiest lovers Arcady might boast,
 Could not the entrance of this thought forbid : 15
 O be thou wise as they, soul-gifted Maid !
 Nor rate too high what must so quickly fade,
 So soon be lost.

Then shall love teach some virtuous Youth
 'To draw out of the object of his eyes,' 20
 The while on thee they gaze in simple truth,
 Hues more exalted, 'a refined form,'
 That dreads not age, nor suffers from the worm,
 And never dies.

—*Wordsworth.*

9.—TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY.

9.—TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH, IN APRIL 1786.

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flower,
Thou's met me in an evil hour ;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem.
To spare thee now is past my power,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas ! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie Lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
Wi' speckled breast, 10
When upward-springing, blithe, to greet
The purpling east.

Could blew the bitter-biting north
 Upon thy early, humble birth ;
 Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth 15
 Amid the storm,
 Scarce reared above the parent earth
 Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,
High sheltering woods and wa's mann shield, 20
But thou, beneath the random bield
 O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field,
 Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad, 25
Thy snawy bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
 In humble guise ;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
 And low thou lies ! 30

APPENDIX.

Such is the fate of artless Maid,
 Sweet floweret of the rural shade !
 By love's simplicity betrayed,
 And guileless trust ;
 Till she, like thee, all soiled is laid
 Low i' the dust. 35

Such is the fate of simple bard,
 On life's rough ocean luckless star'd !
 Unskilful he to note the card
 Of prudent lore, 40
 Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
 And whelm him o'er !

Such fate to suffering worth is given,
 Who long with wants and woes has striven,
 By human pride or cunning driven 45
 To misery's brink,
 Till, wrenched of every stay but Heaven,
 He, ruined, sink !

Even thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
 That fate is thine—no distant date ; 50
 Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
 Full on thy bloom ;
 Till crushed beneath the furrow's weight
 Shall be thy doom !

—Burns.

10.—FROM “THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES.”

On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,
 How just his hopes, let Swedish Charles decide :
 A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
 No dangers fright him, and no labours tire ;
 O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain, 5
 Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain ;
 No joys to him pacific scepters yield,—
 War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field ;
 Behold surrounding kings their pow'rs combine,

11.—ON THE EVE OF THE BATTLE OF QUATRE BRAS.

And one capitulate, and one resign : 10
 Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain :
 “Think nothing gain’d,” he cries, “till naught remain,
 On Moscow’s walls till Gothic standards fly,
 And all be mine beneath the polar sky.”
 The march begins in military state, 15
 And nations on his eye suspended wait ;
 Stern Famine guards the solitary coast,
 And Winter barricades the realms of Frost :
 He comes ; nor want nor cold his course delay ;—
 Hide, blushing Glory, hide Pultowa’s day : 20
 The vanquish’d hero leaves his broken bands,
 And shows his miseries in distant lands ;
 Condemn’d a needy supplicant to wait,
 While ladies interpose and slaves debate.
 But did not Chance at length her error mend ? 25
 Did no subverted empire mark his end ?
 Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound ?
 Or hostile millions press him to the ground ?
 His fall was destin’d to a barren strand,
 A petty fortress, and a dubious hand. 30
 He left the name, at which the world grew pale,
 To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

—*Dr. Johnson.*

11.—ON THE EVE OF THE BATTLE OF QUATRE BRAS.

There was a sound of revelry by night,
 And Belgium’s capital had gathered then
 Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
 The lamps shone o’er fair women and brave men ;
 A thousand hearts beat happily ; and when 5
 Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
 Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
 And all went merry as a marriage-bell ;
 But hush ! hark ! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell.

 Did ye not hear it ?—No ; ’twas but the wind, 10
 Or the car rattling o’er the stony street ;
 On with the dance ! let joy be unconfined ;
 No sleep till morn when Youth and Pleasure meet

APPENDIX.

To chase the glowing hours with flying feet—
 But hark ! that heavy sound breaks in once more, 15
 As if the clouds its echo would repeat ;
 And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before !
 Arm ! arm ! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar !

Within a windowed niche of that high hall
 Sate Brunswick's fated chieftain : he did hear 20
 That sound the first amidst the festival,
 And caught its tone with Death's prophetic ear ;
 And when they smiled because he deemed it near,
 His heart more truly knew that peal too well
 Which stretched his father on a bloody bier, 25
 And roused the vengeance blood alone could quell :
 He rushed into the field, and, foremost fighting, fell.

Ah ! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
 And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
 And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago 30
 Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness ;
 And there were sudden partings, such as press
 The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
 Which ne'er might be repeated ; who could guess
 If ever more should meet those mutual eyes, 35
 Since upon night so sweet such awful morn could rise ?

And there was mounting in hot haste : the steed,
 The mustering squadron, and the clattering car
 Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
 And swiftly forming in the ranks of war ; 40
 And the deep thunder, peal on peal, afar :
 And near, the beat of the alarming drum
 Roused up the soldier ere the morning star ;
 While thronged the citizens with terror dumb,
 Or whispering, with white lips—"The foe ! they come ! they
 come !" 45

And wild and high the "Cameron's Gathering" rose !
 The war-note of Lochiel, which Albyn's hills
 Have heard, and heard, too, have her Saxon foes :—
 How in the noon of night that pibroch thrills,

12.—AFTER THE BATTLE.

Savage and shrill ! But with the breath which fills 50
 Their mountain-pipe, so fill the mountaineers
 With the fierce native daring which instils
 The stirring memory of a thousand years,
 And Evan's, Donald's fame rings in each clansman's ear !

And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves, 55
 Dewy with nature's tear-drops as they pass,
 Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
 Over the unreturning brave,—alas !
 Ere evening to be trodden like the grass
 Which now beneath them, but above shall grow 60
 In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
 Of living valour, rolling on the foe
 And burning with high hope, shall moulder cold and low.

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
 Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay, 65
 The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
 The morn the marshalling in arms,—the day
 Battle's magnificently-stern array !
 The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
 The earth is covered thick with other clay, 70
 Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
 Rider and horse,—friend, foe,—in one red burial blent ?

—*Byron.*

12.—AFTER THE BATTLE.

Night closed around the conqueror's way
 And lightnings showed the distant hill,
 Where those who lost that dreadful day
 Stood few and faint, but fearless still !
 The soldier's hope, the patriot's zeal, 5
 For ever dimmed, for ever crossed,—
 O who shall say what heroes feel
 When all but life and honour's lost ?

The last sad hour of freedom's dream,
 And valour's task, moved slowly by, 10
 While mute they watched, till morning's beam
 Should rise and give them light to die.

APPENDIX.

There's yet a world where souls are free,
 Where tyrants taint not nature's bliss ;
 If Death that world's bright opening be, 15
 O who would live a slave in this ?

—*T. Moore.*

13.—THE POET IN WAR-TIME.

(FROM "THE BIGLOW PAPERS.")

Time wuz, the rhymes come crowdin' thick
 Ez office-seekers arter 'lection,
 An' into ary place 'ould stick
 Without no bother nor objection ;
 But sence the war my thoughts hang back 5
 Ez though I wanted to enlist 'em ;
 An' subs'tutes,—*they* don't never lack,
 But then they'll slope afore you've mist 'em.

Nothin' don't seem like wut it wuz ;
 I can't see wut there is to hender, 10
 An' yit my brains jes' go buzz, buzz,
 Like bumblebees agin a winder ;
 'Fore these times come, in all airth's row,
 Ther' wuz one quiet place, my head in,
 Where I could hide an' think,—but now 15
 It's all one teeter, hopin', dreadin'.

Where's Peace? I start, some clear-blown night,
 When gaunt stone walls grow numb an' number,
 An', creakin' 'cross the snow-crus' white,
 Walk the col' starlight into summer ; 20
 Up grows the moon, an' swell by swell
 Thru' the pale pasturs silvers dimmer
 Than the last smile thet strives to tell
 O' love gone heavenward in its shimmer.

I hev ben gladder o' sech things 25
 Than cocks o' Spring or bees o' clover ;
 They filled my heart with livin' springs,
 But now they seem to freeze 'em over ;

13.—THE POET IN WAR-TIME.

Sights innercent ez babes on knee,
 Peaceful ez eyes o' pastur'd cattle, 30
 Jes' cos they be so, seem to me
 To rile me more with thoughts o' battle.

Indoors an' out by spells I try ;
 Ma'am Natur' keeps her spin-wheel goin',
 But leaves my natur' stiff and dry 35
 Ez fiels o' clover arter mowin';
 An' her jes' keepin' on the same,
 Calmer 'n a clock, and never carin',
 An' findin' nary thing to blame,
 Is wus than ef she took to swearin'. 40

Snow-flakes come whisperin' on the pane,—
 The charm makes blazin' logs so pleasant,—
 But I can't hark to wut they're say'n',
 With Grant or Sherman ollers present ;
 The chimbleys shudder in the gale, 45
 Thet hulls, then suddin takes to flappin'
 Like a shot hawk ; but all's ez stale
 To me ez so much sperit-rappin'.

Under the yaller-pines I house,
 When sunshine makes 'em all sweet-scented, 50
 An' hear among their furry boughs
 The baskin' west-wind purr contented,
 While 'way o'er head, ez sweet an' low
 Ez distant bells thet ring for meetin',
 The wedged wil' geese their bugles blow, 55
 Further an' further south retreatin'.

Or up the slippery knob I strain
 An' see a hundred hills like islans
 Lift their blue woods in broken chain
 Out o' the sea o' snowy silence ; 60
 The farm-smokes, sweetes' sight on airth,
 Slow thru the winter air a-shrinkin',
 Seem kin o' sad, an' roun' the hearth
 Of empty places set me thinkin'.

APPENDIX.

Beaver roars hoarse with meltin' snows, An' rattles di'mons from his granite : Time wuz, he snatched away my prose, An' into psalms or satires ran it ; But he, nor all the rest thet once Started my blood to country-dances, Can't set me goin' more 'n a dunce Thet hain't no use for dreams an' fancies.	65
Rat-tat-tat-tattle thrn the street I hear the drummers makin' riot, An' I set thinkin' o' the feet Thet follered once, an' now are quiet,— White feet ez snowdrops immercent, Thet never knowed the paths o' Satan, Whose comin' step ther's ears thet won't, No, not lifelong, leave off awaitin'.	75
Why, hain't I held 'em on my knee ? Didn't I love to see 'em growin', Three likely lads ez wal could be, Hahnsome an' brave an' not tu knowin' ? I set an' look into the blaze Whose natur', jes like theirn, keeps climbin', Ez long'z it lives, in shinin' ways, An' half despise myself for rhymin'.	80
Wut's words to them whose faith an' truth On War's red teestone rang true metal, Who ventur'd life an' love an' youth For the gret prize o' death in battle ? To him who, deadly hurt, agen Flashed on afore the charge's thunder, Tippin' with fire the bolt of men Thet rived the Rebel line asunder ?	85
T'ain't right to hev the young go fust, All throbbin' full o' gifts an' graces, Leavin' life's paupers dry es dust To try an' make b'lieve fill their places.	90

14.—EXTREME UNCTION.

Nothin' but tells us wut we miss,
 Ther's gaps our lives can't never fay in ;
 And *that* world seems so fur from this
 Lef' fur us loafers to grow gray in !

* * * *

Come, Peace ! not like a mourner bowed 105
 For honour lost an' dear ones wasted,
 But proud, to meet a people proud,
 With eyes that tell o' triumph tasted !
 Come, with han' grippin' on the hilt,
 An' step that proves ye Victory's daughter ! 110
 Longin' for you, our sperits wilt
 Like shipwrecked men's on rafs for water.

Come, while our country feels the lift
 Of a gret instinet shoutin' forwards,
 An' knows *that* freedom ain't a gift 115
 That tarries long in hans o' cowards !
 Come, sech ez mothers prayed for, when
 They kissed their cross with lips that quivered,
 An' bring fair wages for brave men,—
 A nation saved, a race delivered ! 120

—*J. R. Lowell.*

14.—EXTREME UNCTION.

Go ! leave me, Priest ; my soul would be
 Alone with the consoler, Death ;
 Far sadder eyes than thine will see
 This crumbling clay yield up its breath ;
 These shrivelled hands have deeper stains 5
 Than holy oil can cleanse away,—
 Hands that have plucked the world's coarse gains
 As erst they plucked the flowers of May.

Call, if thou canst, to these gray eyes
 Some faith from youth's traditions wrung ; 10
 This fruitless husk which dustward dries
 Has been a heart once, has been young ;

APPENDIX.

On this bowed head the awful Past
 Once laid its consecrating hands ;
 The Future in its purpose vast 15
 Paused, waiting my supreme commands.

But look ! whose shadows block the door ?
 Who are those two that stand aloof ?
 See ! on my hands this freshening gore
 Writes o'er again its crimson proof ! 20
 My looked-for death-bed guests are met ;
 There my dead Youth doth wring its hands,
 And there, with eyes that goad me yet,
 The ghost of my Ideal stands !

God bends from out the deep and says,— 25
 “ I gave thee the great gift of life ;
 Wast thou not called in many ways ?
 Are not my earth and heaven at strife ?
 I gave thee of my seed to sow,
 Bringest thou me my hundred-fold ? ” 30
 Can I look up with face aglow,
 And answer, “ Father here is gold ? ”

I have been innocent ; God knows
 When first this wasted life began,
 Not grape with grape more kindly grows 35
 Than I with every brother-man :
 Now here I gasp ; what lose my kind,
 When this fast ebbing breath shall part ?
 What bands of love and service bind
 This being to the world's sad heart ? 40

Christ still was wandering o'er the earth
 Without a place to lay His head ;
 He found free welcome at my hearth,
 He shared my cup and broke my bread :
 Now, when I hear those steps sublime 45
 That bring the other world to this,
 My snake-turned nature, sunk in slime,
 Starts sideways with defiant hiss.

14.—EXTREME UNCTION.

Upon the hour when I was born,
 God said, "Another man shall be," 50
 And the great Maker did not scorn
 Out of himself to fashion me ;
 He sunned me with his ripening looks,
 And Heaven's rich instincts in me grew,
 As effortless as woodland nooks 55
 Send violets up and paint them blue.

Yes, I who now, with angry tears,
 Am exiled back to brutish clod,
 Have borne unquenched for fourscore years
 A spark of the eternal God : 60
 And to what end ? How yield I back
 The trust for such high uses given ?
 Heaven's light hath but revealed a track
 Whereby to crawl away from Heaven.

Men think it is an awful sight 65
 To see a soul just set adrift
 On that drear voyage from whose night
 The ominous shadows never lift ;
 But 'tis more awful to behold
 A helpless infant newly born, 70
 Whose little hands unconscious hold
 The keys of darkness and of morn.

Mine held them once ; I flung away
 Those keys that might have open set
 The golden sluices of the day, 75
 But clutch the keys of darkness yet ;—
 I hear the reapers singing go
 Into God's harvest ; I, that might
 With them have chosen, here below
 Grope shuddering at the gates of night. 80

O glorious Youth, that once wast mine !
 O high Ideal ! all in vain
 Ye enter at this ruined shrine
 Whence worship ne'er shall rise again ;

APPENDIX.

85

The bat and owl inhabit here,
 The snake nests in the altar-stone,
 The sacred vessels moulder near,
 The image of the God is gone.

—J. R. Lowell.

15.—ALL SAINTS.

One feast, of holy days the crest,
 I, though no Churchman, love to keep,
 All-Saints,—the unknown good that rest
 In God's still memory folded deep ;
 The bravely dumb that did their deed, 5
 And scorned to blot it with a name,
 Men of the plain heroic breed,
 That loved Heaven's silence more than fame.

Such lived not in the past alone,
 But thread to-day the unheeding street, 10
 And stairs to Sin and Famine known
 Sing with the welcome of their feet ;
 The den they enter grows a shrine,
 The grimy sash an oriel burns,
 Their cup of water warms like wine, 15
 Their speech is filled from heavenly urns.

About their brows to me appears
 An aureole traced in tenderest light,
 The rainbow-gleam of smiles through tears
 In dying eyes, by them made bright, 20
 Of souls that shivered on the edge
 Of that chill ford repassed no more,
 And in their mercy felt the pledge
 And sweetness of the farther shore.

—J. R. Lowell.

16.—SONNET.

It is not to be thought of that the flood
 Of British freedom, which to the open sea
 Of the world's praise from dark antiquity
 Hath flowed, “with pomp of waters, unwithstood,”

18.—SELECTIONS FROM TENNYSON'S "IN MEMORIAM."

Roused though it be full often to a mood 5
 Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
 That this most famous stream in bogs and sands
 Should perish ; and to evil and to good
 Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung
 Armoury of the invincible knights of old : 10
 We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
 That Shakespeare spake ; the faith and morals hold
 Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung
 Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

—*Wordsworth.*

17.—SONNET.

MUTABILITY.

From low to high doth dissolution climb,
 And sink from high to low, along a scale
 Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail :
 A musical but melancholy chime
 Which they can hear who meddle not with crime, 5
 Nor avarice, nor over-anxious care.
 Truth fails not ; but her outward forms that bear
 The longest date do melt like frosty rime,
 That in the morning whitened hill and plain
 And is no more ; drop like the tower sublime 10
 Of yesterday, which royally did wear
 His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
 Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
 Or the unimaginable touch of Time.

—*Wordsworth.*

18.—SELECTIONS FROM TENNYSON'S "IN MEMORIAM."

I.

I held it truth, with him who sings
 To one clear harp in divers tones,
 That men may rise on stepping-stones
 Of their dead selves to higher things.

APPENDIX.

But who shall so forecast the years 5
 And find in loss a gain to match?
 Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
 The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,
 Let darkness keep her raven gloss : 10
 Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
 To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
 The long result of love, and boast,
 ' Behold the man that loved and lost, 15
 But all he was is overworn.'

XXVII.

I envy not in any moods
 The captive void of noble rage,
 The linnet born within the cage,
 That never knew the summer woods :

I envy not the beast that takes 5
 His license in the field of time,
 Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
 To whom a conscience never wakes ;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
 The heart that never plighted troth 10
 But stagnates in the weeds of sloth ;
 Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall ;
 I feel it, when I sorrow most ;
 'Tis better to have loved and lost 15
 Than never to have loved at all.

LIV.

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;

That nothing walks with aimless feet ; 5
 That not one life shall be destroy'd,
 Or cast as rubbish to the void,
 When God hath made the pile complete ;

That not a worm is cloven in vain ;
 That not a moth with vain desire 10
 Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
 Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything ;
 I can but trust that good shall fall
 At last—far off—at last, to all, 15
 And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream : but what am I ?
 An infant crying in the night :
 An infant crying for the light :
 And with no language but a cry. 20

LXXVI.

Take wings of fancy, and ascend,
 And in a moment set thy face
 Where all the starry heavens of space
 Are sharpen'd to a needle's end ;

Take wings of foresight ; lighten thro' 5
 The secular abyss to come,
 And lo, thy deepest lays are dumb
 Before the mouldering of a yew ;

And if the matin songs, that woke
 The darkness of our planet, last, 10
 Thine own shall wither in the vast,
 Ere half the lifetime of an oak.

Ere these have clothed their branchy bowers
 With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain ;
 And what are they when these remain 15
 The ruin'd shells of hollow towers ?

APPENDIX.

LXXXVI.

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
 That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
 Of evening over brake and bloom
 And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below 5
 Thro' all the dewy-tassell'd wood,
 And shadowing down the horned flood
 In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh 10
 The full new life that feeds thy breath
 Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
 Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
 On leagues of odour streaming far,
 To where in yonder orient star 15
 A hundred spirits whisper 'Peace.'

CXIV.

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
 Against her beauty? May she mix
 With men and prosper! Who shall fix
 Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire : 5
 She sets her forward countenance
 And leaps into the future chance,
 Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain— 10
 She cannot fight the fear of death.
 What is she, cut from love and faith,
 But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst
 All barriers in her onward race
 For power. Let her know her place ; 15
 She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
 If all be not in vain ; and guide
 Her footsteps, moving side by side
 With wisdom, like the younger child : 20

For she is earthly of the mind,
 But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
 O, friend, who camest to thy goal
 So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee, 25
 Who grewest not alone in power
 And knowledge, but by year and hour
 In reverence and in charity.

CXXXI.

O living will that shalt endure
 When all that seems shall suffer shock,
 Rise in the spiritual rock,
 Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust 5
 A voice as unto him that hears,
 A cry above the conquer'd years
 To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
 The truths that never can be proved 10
 Until we close with all we loved,
 And all we flow from, soul in soul.

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